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# Problems of Communism

Essay-Reviews

Philip Shashko
Brantly Womack
Ted Perlmutter
Roger Hamburg

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 1990

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Guy G. Imart

Deng versus the Peasantry
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Labor Policy in China
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The "Karabakh Syndrome" and Azerbaijani Politics
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NOTE

Four Modernizations That China Needs
Andrew J. Spano


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COVER: Mirzobek Mambetov, second from right, a chief shepherd on a state farm in Kirgizia, shares tea with his family. Photo by V. Korotayev for TASS via Sovfoto.

*Problems of Communism* (ISSN 0032-941x) is a bimonthly publication providing analyses and significant information about the contemporary affairs of the Soviet Union, China, and comparable states and political movements. Views of contributors, as well as geographic boundaries and names, do not necessarily reflect the policies of the United States Government.

*On all editorial matters,* communications should be addressed to: The Editors, *Problems of Communism,* US Information Agency, United States of America, 301 4th Street SW, Washington, DC, 20547, USA. Telephone (202) 619-4230.

*On subscriptions,* communications should be addressed to: The Superintendent of Documents, US Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 20402, USA, preferably using the subscription form provided at the back of this issue. Outside the United States, please address inquiries to the Public Affairs Section, Embassy of the United States of America.

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*An annual index* for *Problems of Communism* appears in the November-December issue (No. 6) of each year except in the case of the first three volumes, which are covered in a combined index in the November-December issue (No. 6) of Vol. III. Material from the journal is also indexed in *ABC POL SCI, Bibliographie Internationale des Sciences Sociales (all Sections), Current Contents, Current Military and Political Literature, Economic Abstracts, Historical Abstracts, Index to US Government Periodicals, International Political Science Abstracts, Public Affairs Information Service, Social Sciences Citation Index, Social Sciences Index,* and *United States Political Science Documents.*

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IN THIS ISSUE OF

# Problems of Communism

## Articles

**Kirgizia-Kazakhstan: A Hinge or a Fault-Line?**

Guy G. Imart

The craving for independence from the Soviet empire among the Kirgiz and Kazakhs is as strong as among the Baltic peoples and Caucasians. In contemplating their future, Kirgiz and Kazakhs also reject Islamic fundamentalism as well as any kind of pan-Turkism, for each threatens to drown Kirgiz-Kazakh national identity. Rather, Kirgiz and Kazakhs—motivated by a democratic consciousness rooted deeply in their common culture—wish to construct a polity based on small, autonomous, self-regulated communities, founded on voluntary and equal relations, aiming toward the free development of each of their members, and ruled by representatives with limited powers.

**The "Karabakh Syndrome" and Azerbaijani Politics**

Mark Saroyan

The February 1988 decision by the Armenian majority living in the Azerbaijan republic's Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast to seek unification with the Armenian republic catalyzed national assertiveness in wide portions of the Azerbaijani populace. This "Karabakh Syndrome" hindered the development of a broader range of democratizing proposals, and led to successive purges of the Azerbaijani republic's party leadership, armed conflict between the populaces of Armenia and Azerbaijan, and ultimately the forceful intervention by the Soviet army in Baku following the intense anti-Armenian riots there in early 1990. The developments are indicative of the contradictions between *republic sovereignty vis-à-vis Moscow and republic sovereignty vis-à-vis minority nationalities within* republics.

**Deng versus the Peasantry: Recollectivization in the Countryside**

Edward Friedman

The prevalent view among Western observers and Chinese intellectuals has been that the Chinese peasantry is dependent, less than rational, and thus incapable of espousing democracy. In fact, it is economically rational and a potential supporter of democracy. As the Deng regime, in its attempt to woo the urban workers in state enterprises, reverses the reforms that had benefited the countryside, the peasants are becoming increasingly alienated from the existing regime. Since the spring of 1989, they have been playing an increasingly active role in Chinese politics.

**Labor Policy in China: Reform and Retrogression**

Jeanne L. Wilson

A decade of economic reform brought significant transformation at the margins of China's huge labor force and some efforts by the Communist leadership to increase the role of trade unions and elected workers' congresses in representing worker interests as well as to move from the enterprise-based system of social security and unemployment compensation toward a broader government-based system. Anger at increasing wage differentials between public and private sectors, accelerating inflation, and widely-perceived official corruption led workers to form autonomous federations that participated in the pro-democracy demonstrations of 1989, a phenomenon that may explain the ferocity of the regime's ultimate crackdown and its reversal of at least some of the liberalizing moves of the 1980's in the labor sector.

(Abstracts continued on reverse side)

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## Note

### Four Modernizations That China Needs

Andrew J. Spano

In this note, Andrew Spano, who taught education and English at the Taian Teachers' College in Shandong province during 1988–89, discusses the state of basic human services in China as he observed them. He maintains that transportation, health, agriculture, and education are being seriously neglected and desperately need modernizing. He points out that students feel the economic and political situation is so bad that many have abandoned hope for the future under the existing system. Their despair was dramatically acted out by the democracy movement of 1989.

## Essay-Reviews

### The Past in Bulgaria's Future

Philip Shashko

Recent works on Bulgaria's history reveal numerous continuities between its pre-communist and communist phases. The Macedonian problem, the problem of the Turkish minority, the absence of a democratic political culture, the military's involvement in politics, and heavy state control of the economy were all characteristic of Bulgaria both before and after the Communists' seizure of power. Bulgaria's transformation from an agrarian to an industrial state and its successes in education, science, literature, and the arts have prepared the ground for the building of a functioning democratic society. Nevertheless, the legacies of Bulgaria's recent history will weigh heavily on contemporary Bulgarian attempts to create a viable political democracy and a functioning market economy.

### The Chinese Party-State

Brantly Womack

Both the spring 1989 pro-democracy movement and the Beijing massacre shook the foundations of the Chinese party-state. In the period of repression that followed, the expected leadership succession and such policies as further decentralization and a greater role for technocratic expertise were aborted by the return of the conservatives to the top of the regime's hierarchy. Thus, the future of the party-state is uncertain. Although a party-state driven by a sense of revolutionary mission cannot be revived in China, it will continue to be influential as the framework in which a new and different politics evolves.

### The PCI: From Historic Compromise to Reconstitution

Ted Perlmutter

Several recent books provide useful insight into the dramatically negative impact that the failed "historic compromise" has had on the fortunes of the Italian Communist Party (PCI). Between 1976 and 1978, the PCI attempted to act as a partner of the "nationalist unity government." In attempting to win full participation in the governing coalition led by the Christian Democratic party, the Communists offended their own constituents by advocating wage austerity, appointment rather than election of neighborhood councils, and stern measures against terrorists, even as they remained excluded from the government. Moreover, the PCI now finds the Socialist Party competing more effectively for votes on the left of the Italian political spectrum. It is this history, not the revolutions of 1989 in Eastern Europe, that has driven the Italian Communists to reconstitute themselves under a different name in autumn 1990.

### Soviet–Latin American Relations

Roger Hamburg

The Soviet Union has long pursued a "dual-track" policy in Latin America. Moscow has supported ideologically kindred regimes in Cuba, Nicaragua, and Grenada with extensive military and economic aid. The Soviets have also dealt with the larger states of the region through normal diplomatic relations. "New thinking" in Soviet foreign policy has modified the dual-track approach somewhat, leading Moscow to cooperate with the US in resolving some regional issues. Although the Soviets have yet to jettison totally their traditional Latin American clients, particularly Cuba, domestic turmoil and economic stringency in the Soviet Union may soon force a change in this aspect of Moscow's Latin American policy.

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# Kirgizia-Kazakhstan: A Hinge or a Fault-Line?

**Guy G. Imart**

> *The principal aspect of* perestroyka *for me is the continuation of the decolonization process which was suspended in the twenties.*[1]

At a time when the hair-raising new Soviet play seems to have exceeded the expectations of even the most "apocalyptic" national minority watchers,[2] it is of the utmost importance to try to understand which part each of the numerous national actors —bit players as well as leads—is playing in the unfolding drama taking place among Soviet nations. The Western audience, although enthralled by the suspense, remains bewildered by the unexpected turn of events during the last act. A previously unknown character with slanted eyes flashed across the stage in Alma-Ata in December 1986, and a sudden shiver ran through the actors who had until then wearily labored their way through endless kitschy verses about brotherly love. A short time later, when the second leads—unruly Caucasians and obstinate Balts whom a previous Director had, much earlier, unceremoniously introduced into the plot—entered and began to voice their claims, everybody on stage and in the audience was speechless. Could it be that the new Director had lost control over the actors?

Spectators do need some sort of explanation, especially with regard to the Kirgiz and Kazakhs—two of the more obscure national actors. Three things should be kept in mind when dealing with Kirgizia and Kazakhstan. First, politically—and nationally—Kirgizstan (the territory actually inhabited by Kirgiz) does not exactly coincide with the Soviet Socialist Republic of Kirgizia. North of the Alatau mountain range, the Soviet-imposed distinction between steppe dwellers and mountain dwellers, i. e., in post-1925 bureaucratic parlance, between "Kazakhs" and "Kirgiz," has never been totally accepted by the peoples involved. Strong similarities in language and custom, a common history and economy, as well as the admonition in the age-old epic trilogy *Manas*[3] that "Kazakhs and Kirgiz are blood brothers" (*Kazak-Kyrgyz bir tuugan*)—a theme that is repeated several times as a kind of leitmotif concluding well-known passages—bind together these two peoples. They now contemplate a common future inasmuch as neither tribal squabbles in the past nor petty misunderstandings in the present have ever succeeded in really splitting them.[4]

The Kirgiz and Kazakh peoples have long mediated the quite distinct "European" and "Oriental" halves of the Russian Empire and at the same time have linked the Turkic-speaking "island" of Bashkiria-Tatarstan to

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[1]Olzhas Suleymenov's speech to the first Congress of People's Deputies, in Oleg Glebov and John Crowfoot, Eds., *The Soviet Empire: Its Nations Speak Out,* New York, Harwood Academic Publishers, 1989, p. 147.

[2]See, for example, Richard Pipes's reflections on nationality issues, in C. A. Linden and D. K. Simes, Eds., *Nationalities and Nationalism in the USSR: A Soviet Dilemma,* Washington, DC, The Institute for Sino-Soviet Studies, The George Washington University, 1977, pp. 9–11.

[3]The origins of the *Manas* epic are unknown. It most certainly dates to the 16th century, and probably much earlier. It is considered to be a kind of all-embracing encyclopedia of national knowledge. The whole epic has more than 500,000 verses.

[4]See, for example, Chingiz Aitmatov's defense of Kazakh interests in Glebov and Crowfoot, op. cit., p. 146.



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*The art of performing the Kirgiz-Kazakh epic trilogy* Manas *has been transmitted from generation to generation. Here, a young Kirgiz recites verses from the epic as part of the traditional* manaschi *competition.*

**—TASS from Sovfoto.**

the "Turkestanian" mainland. South of the Alatau (and probably across the border in China), the more deeply Islamized Kirgiz population has long lived under Uzbek-Tajik—or Uighur—influence. It is much more firmly anchored in the *Dar al-Islam.* Thus, there are marked differences in *Weltanschauung* between the northern Kirgiz and Kazakhs on the one hand and the southern Kirgiz on the other, even if recent clashes with the Uzbeks and the Tajiks seem to have brought together these two branches of the Kirgiz nation.

Second, since the December 1986 demonstrations in Alma-Ata, it is clear that in Kirgizia-Kazakhstan, just as in the Caucasus or in the Baltic republics—and despite the fact that the local intelligentsia is less vocal in its claims—Moscow does not play the lead anymore. A once monopolistic centripetal power has been successfully challenged by centrifugal forces. Whatever the result of this challenge may be, a monolithic policy, independently decided at the top and uniformly imposed on the periphery, is no longer practical. A form of local "autonomy" has thus already been achieved inasmuch as any decision taken in Moscow is now likely to yield different results in different places as it reflects diverse local realities.[5]

Finally, here, as in other extremities of the empire, *glasnost'* has revealed only those superficial aspects of the local life that were easy to detect long ago.[6] As before, it has ignored the on-going but intangible development of national awareness.

It is nevertheless this author's profound conviction that the craving for full independence is, in Kirgizia and Kazakhstan, as strong as in Lithuania or in the Caucasus. Because the development of this tendency is hardly possible to trace through the daily media, especially during a period of extreme instability and unpredictability,[7] it seems more appropriate to focus on the deep cultural structures that are likely to remain relevant even if, once more, Moscow proves able, thanks to Western passivity or connivance, to weather the present storm.

## A Peculiar Part of Turkestan

Contemporary events on the Soviet periphery can be explained in large part by local specificity, or, one could say, by "group individualism." This is true not only from one region to the other, but also within a given ethno-geographical unit. Particularly in Kirgizia-Kazakhstan, a basic set of national psychological characteristics accounts for attitudes in the sociological/political sphere: some of these characteristics are likely to hasten these peoples' attainment of self-determination; others, by contrast, will probably retard this process.

Kirgiz and Kazakhs remain even today overwhelmingly rural dwellers—statistically and psychologically. Kirgiz are high-mountain dwellers and as such have long exhibited a kind of "bashfulness" or inferiority complex toward their neighbors down on the plains and toward the "cunning" city dwellers. This has earned them among cultured Tatars and more thoroughly Islamized Uzbeks a reputation as "Boetians," a term tainted with the idea of being "half-kafirs." To make up for this handicap, they pride themselves in being plain, guileless people, but they quite willingly let themselves be taken for people halfway between the idyllic "Bon

[5]See Paul Goble's analysis on this point in *The Failure of Communism: The Western Response,* Munich, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Fund, 1989, p. 20.

[6]Momun Myrza (G. Imart), "The World According to '*Sovettyk Kyrgystan*'," *Central Asian Survey* (London), December 1983, pp. 109–26.

[7]I fully agree with L. E. Eagleburger's remark, quoted in *The Failure of Communism,* p. 6: "I feared instinctively that anything I might say to you now would become irrelevant or outdated by this evening. Such is the pace of changes these days."



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Sauvage" and the romantic eternal rebel. Today, this socio-cultural gap (especially with regard to the Kazakhs, who, until the 1920's, had acted as a cultural avant-garde) has been both objectively and subjectively closed.

However, the Kirgiz ethnic mentality has retained many qualities from previous periods, especially from the *Zar Zaman*—the Time of Sorrow (1863–1916)—which followed the loss of independence. Whether, as René Grousset has it,[8] Nestorianism's and Buddhism's "meekness and kindliness have softened [the Kirgiz] ruggedness" or for some other reason, they do not exhibit the sort of violent fanaticism they have so often fallen victim to in the past. They are realistically aware of being weak—a small people surrounded on all sides by more powerful neighbors, with little control over their fate. Many Kirgiz still recognize in the epic figure of Asan Kaigy (Asan the Compassionate) the features typical of their ethnic *Weltanschauung.* It entails an inborn reserve, or even aloofness, and a tendency to withdraw into one's domestic world, not out of bashfulness but out of distrust for loud, demonstrative behavior.

Kirgiz-Kazakh nationalism thus remains today, as in the past, as totally deprived of expansionist dreams as its counterpart in the Baltic republics, alien to all sorts of abstract "pan-isms," strictly self-contained, and as discretely limited in territorial extent and ethnic content as Russian nationalism—its very opposite—is unlimited in both.[9] The Kirgiz and Kazakhs have no geostrategic problems save to protect themselves from the geostrategic appetites of others.

Conversely, defense of the homeland and of the local way of life trigger a last-ditch determination and a stubborn resistance—against the Oirats and the Qing dynasty in the past; against the Russians in 1898 and 1916; during the Basmachi wars with Soviet power from 1918 to 1922; "on the cultural front" during Stalin's attacks on the *Manas* epics; and in general, against all state-socialist encroachments on ethnic specificity.[10] But in resisting these various invasions, Kirgiz and Kazakhs never developed any ideology of hatred or indulged in vengeful excesses.

After a century and a half of Russian domination, the Kirgiz and Kazakh societies have thus been able to preserve much of their traditional structure and integrity. Clan and tribal ties remain strong, and the nation as a whole has avoided the processes of spiritual denationalization and sociological de-tribalization so typical both of Russian society and urban dwellers, and of destitute, disorganized rural groups, as in Tashkent or the Fergana Valley.

The Kirgiz response to the period of stagnation (*zastoy*) was to retreat deep into the countryside far from the cities and the isolated, industrial (Russified) centers, and thus preserve national homogeneity. But although this polarization has diminished the prospects of inter-ethnic clashes, it has increased the likelihood of a totally bifurcated society in which a diminishing Slavic minority will not be able to implement the firebreak tactics of the "Interfronts," as it has done in the Baltic republics. It also bars the penetration both of the official and unofficial mafias—the KGB, the urban economic gangs, and the aggressive half-fundamentalist, half-Sufi sects—making less probable the kind of riots that occurred between the Meskhetian Turks and the Uzbeks, as well as the kind of full-scale wars that occur when such ethnic forces settle scores, as we recently witnessed in Baku.

True enough, this "provincial" atmosphere also limits the strength and the prospects of a popular front. The local intelligentsia, still crippled quantitatively and qualitatively by the terror of 1934–38, has some brilliant "half-dissidents" (Chingiz Aitmatov, Olzhas Suleymenov), but still lacks both the thick web of local literati educated in local and Tatar *jadid* schools that the 1917 generation had developed in the countryside and patrons in the highest official circles, like the writer and statesman Tynystan-uulu (?–1937), who, as they were more "nationalists" than "socialists," were able and willing to raise the political consciousness of the people to demand self-government.

Prospects for national political activism are also burdened by plenty of wait-and-see yes-men and by disgruntled *apparatchiki* from the Brezhnev era, whose nepotism had provided their numerous kinsmen with real ethnic breathing space. These people now resent

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[8]René Grousset, *La face de l'Asie* (The Face of Asia), Paris, Payot, 1955, p. 53.

[9]While the exact territorial and ethnic *limits* of Russia proper remain anybody's guess, Roberte Hamayon has recently proposed a far-reaching explanation for the Inner Asian sense of inextensibility of material resources and of the homeland: hunting, contrary to agriculture, does not allow accumulation of wealth and power. See "La chasse à l'âme. Essai sur le chamanisme sibérien à partir de l'example bouriate" (The Hunt for the Spirit. An Essay on Siberian Shamanism Based on the Example of the Buryats), Thèse d'Etat, University of Nanterre, 1988, p. 321.

[10]The Oirots, a Mongolian people from the Lake Balkhash-Altay region, conquered the Kirgiz in the late 17th century. In 1898, Kirgiz, suffering from agricultural incursions into their territory, and Uzbek and Tajik farmers, burdened by heavy taxes, united under a Muslim leader, Ishan Muhammed-Ali-Khalfa Sabir Sufiyev, in the so-called Andijan Rebellion. This rebellion assumed the dimensions of a holy war against the Russians and was suppressed by Russian troops. In 1916, Kirgiz resentment over the loss of their land and wartime labor mobilization led to a major revolt in which thousands of Kirgiz died and 150,000 fled to China in the great *ürkün* (headlong flight). The Basmachi revolt began in 1918 when Irgysh, of the Kokand Autonomous Government's vanquished military forces, formed guerrilla units to fight the Bolsheviks. After Enver Pasha, who united the Basmachis into a single force, was killed in 1922, the movement subsided.



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Mikhail Gorbachev's "cleansing," although they try to pass off this affront to their past loyalty as patriotic indignation against Russian meddling in ethnic affairs.

However, in complete contrast to the deep despair so typical of people in other peripheral regions and despite being crowded by a re-Stalinized China at their back, Kazakh and Kirgiz intellectuals remain optimistic and confident. An exceptional baby boom and complete fidelity to the Kirgiz and Kazakh languages rule out any risk of biological absorption or cultural denationalization.

More broadly speaking, Kirgiz and Kazakh intellectuals have become conscious anew, since the Islamic revival and Moscow's abortive Afghan gamble, of the extreme geostrategic importance of their country. Inside the Soviet Union itself, Kirgizia-Kazakhstan welds together, as we have noted, the two, increasingly divergent and mutually hostile parts of the empire, and provides the European part with strategic non-ferrous ores and a safe rear. Outside the Union, any change in its present subservience to Moscow would threaten Sino-Soviet co-ownership of the Inner Asian heartland and jeopardize the chances for direct Soviet access to the Indian Ocean and the *Dar al-Islam*. In contrast to the Baltic republics, which can hope to regain their freedom within the framework of some neutral buffer centered on Scandinavia, no solution short of a Versailles Treaty–like rearrangement on an even larger scale seems conceivable here.

In the short run, the strategic importance of Kazakhstan and Kirgizia, together with a firsthand knowledge of the kind of preemptive strike the security agencies are capable of, probably explains much of these peoples' present self-restraint. In the long run, however, as intellectuals and non-intellectuals alike come to grips with these enormous stakes, they will likely transcend a defensive posture that has been centered up to now almost exclusively on claims for mere *cultural* autonomy and embrace a more active stance. Such a stance, however, would imply a difficult strategic/political choice between two, equally unsavory solutions. The first is to maintain a secular, modernist stance and at the same time risk being manipulated by Moscow (as their forefathers were) and shunned as "traitors" by their southern neighbors. The second alternative would entail blindly joining the pan-Turkestanian liberation movement and thereby risk, at a minimum, losing autonomy and specificity while possibly becoming embroiled in some fundamentalist utopian design (just another totalitarian dead end for them, even more dangerous than the now stale Russian/Soviet grand design). On the basis of the features of Kazakh and Kirgiz culture and history so far described, I shall try now to weigh the pros and cons of the two alternatives.

[11] *The Soviet Empire*, p. 137.
[12] Ibid., p. 139.

## The Elder Brother's Best Disciple?

The very emergence—around 1850 in Kazakhstan and 1890 in Kirgizia—of a national intelligentsia was linked to the Turkic Renaissance and, later, to the *jadid* movement. But, from the historian, folklorist, and ethnographer Chokan Valikhanov (1835–65) and the poet Toktogul Satylgan (1864–1933) to Tynystan-uulu and today's Chingiz Aitmatov, this ethnic revival fully accorded with—and was even responsible for—a voluntary acceptance of "European" (liberal, "progressive," secular) values and ideals that prevailed among a majority of the Russian, left-of-center intelligentsia.

Such an acceptance of whole portions of an alien *Weltanschauung* is rather characteristic for small, often partially Christianized ethnic groups, but was exceptional among the big, homogeneous, "oriental" nations recently incorporated into the tsarist empire, and particularly unusual for Muslims. Real parallels between many of the new ideals and authentic national values greatly favored this syncretism. Intensified cultural Russification since the 1920's further deepened the symbiosis, as best illustrated, inter alia, by Aitmatov's ability to blend spiritually and psychologically with his Russian, Christian hero in *The Executioner's Block.* Russian culture, Russian literature, the Russian language, even Russian psychological and verbal mannerisms together with typically Russian attitudes became second nature for many of these literati who, for better or worse, contemplated the world—and their own nation—through Russian glasses.

Needless to say, this spontaneous predisposition to sincere humility toward the Elder Brother was encouraged in every possible way during the heydays of Stalin, Khrushchev, and Brezhnev. Politically speaking, it resulted in a full docility, enthusiastically expressed by scores of yes-men, and earned Kirgizia a lasting reputation for "passivity, conservatism, and unanimity."[11]

Judging solely on the basis of Communist Party of Kirgizia First Secretary Absamat Masaliyev's maiden speech to the first USSR Congress of People's Deputies[12]—a faithful rendition of such Gorbachevian clichés as the praise for "strong republics and a strong center" and the condemnation of "sacrilegious attempts to question our eternal values"—one could think that this tradition has been merely adapted to the new reality. However, one becomes more cautious when



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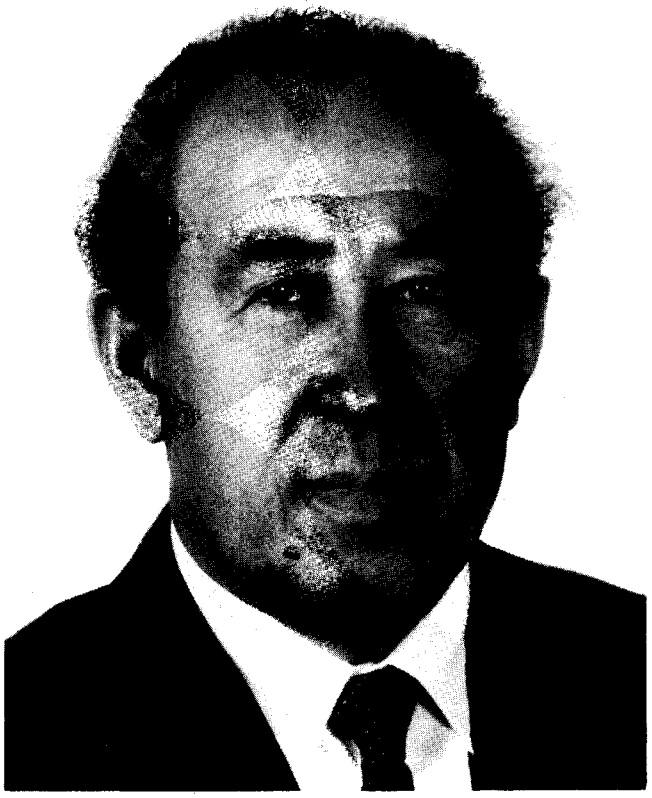

*Absamat M. Masaliyev, first secretary of the Communist Party of Kirgizia.*

**—V. Cheredintsev/TASS from Sovfoto.**

considering how even such an outspoken advocate of national specificity as Aitmatov is now felt (whether correctly or not) to lag behind the national movement. In conformity with the stand adopted by the generation of his father (a prominent victim of the 1934–38 terror), Aitmatov did lead the *cultural* mutiny against linguistic and conceptual Russification. Nevertheless, his cozy relations with the Brezhnev leadership, his status as a high-ranking member of the *nomenklatura,* and a whole series of articles and addresses now considered too orthodox and too restrained have cast doubts—especially among young people—on Aitmatov's ability to follow up with the logical, inescapable consequence of heightened cultural consciousness, i.e., *political* mutiny.

Thus, in recent years, while national problems on the periphery were becoming more and more dramatic and the center's response to them was becoming less and less relevant (or harsher), the once-enthusiastic support for *perestroyka* among national elites noticeably cooled down. Today, especially after Gorbachev's show of brute force in the Caucasus and in Dushanbe, there is a tendency among these elites to transfer their hopes to more "radical" leaders.

Even more important in the long run is the fact that the center's "humanistic" appeals to moderation and its noticeable dismay when confronted with exacerbated "extremism" (read: nationalism) are more and more felt to be the expression of an alien philosophy; after the Alma-Ata "riots" and the ensuing repression, such attitudes smack too much of the soothing "finer" feelings now so condescendingly dumped on the "younger brothers."[13] And these remonstrances are more and more suspected of hypocritically or unconsciously bolstering the Russians' own self-righteousness as they prove less and less able to moderate both the state's trigger-happy behavior and the upsurge of Russian chauvinism. Thus, the ongoing loss of prestige for gurus such as Suleymenov and Aitmatov appears to be more than a mere conflict of generations. It expresses a broader rejection of the Russian model for the future and a reappraisal of its past legitimacy.

In fact, a basic misunderstanding has long marred Russian-Kirgiz relations. During the early 1920's, when, in an atmosphere of expectation and hope, the horrors of the military conquest and the hatreds that motivated the great *ürkün* of 1916 could have faded into oblivion, it was self-evident to the Kirgiz-Kazakh intelligentsia that support for "socialism" meant, first, acceptance of a *liberal* model offering more elbow room for national self-government and, second and more important, that all the modern, secular values embodied by the new regime were efficient recipes to be *adapted* to local specificity so as to ensure full national development.

Quite rapidly, as native intellectuals (and, to a lesser extent, the common people) were assimilating Russian culture and adapting to the socialist polity, they discovered they had erred on both points. They became conscious of what can be termed traditional Russian "ethnic blindness," that is, a psycho-cultural inability to accept, on an equal basis, "otherness." Historically speaking, this lack of understanding for non-Russians' natural propensity for cultural specificity and self-government, this tendency for Russians to integrate *inorodtsy* (foreigners)—indeed easily, but only inasmuch as they submit to Russian cultural superiority, acquiesce to denationalization, and fade into a culturally Russified, sociologically homogenized, and politically leveled-out whole—can be considered a basic characteristic of the Russian nation, easily traceable to the very beginning of the Muscovite expansion.

Too often, even the most reform-minded Russian intellectuals, and those who helped to foster the develop-

[13]See, for example, N. Savastin in *Literaturnaya Gazeta* (Moscow), Feb. 8, 1989.



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*A book stall in an alpine pasture in Kirgizia, September 1972.*

**—Novosti from Sovfoto.**

ment of ethnic minorities, simply could not understand that the efforts of their non-Russian colleagues were focused on goals quite similar but emotionally distinct and *not identical* to their own. Today's *glasnost'* has encouraged debate on this issue, but has not changed its nature: while minority representatives are primarily concerned with their own particular ethnic problems and with the best way to secure for themselves authentic autonomy, Russians continue either to ignore them, or (and this boils down to the same thing) to imagine their own future as if they were alone in the Union or as if other peoples shared their views as a matter of course.

Even—or perhaps one should say especially—those who favor a rebirth of Russian national values seemingly do not suspect that non-Russians might wish to do the same for themselves,[14] and that this entails either a dramatic change in the balance of power within the Union or a basic transformation of the Union itself. They continue to act as if their model was to be automatically applied to all, and they consider calls for autonomy and, all the more, for national self-determination to be, at best, "irrational romanticism," or more often, high treason.

Whether some among the most democratically-minded Russians try to "cool down" minority claims through sincere calls for moderation and remorseful soul-searching or more brawny groups chafe at the insolence of the "rebels" from the petty principalities (*Kleinstaaterei*), something very near to unanimity reunites squabbling Russian factions as soon as the discussion shifts from cosmetic adjustments of the interethnic equilibrium within the sacrosanct borders of the empire toward a challenge to the empire itself. In other words, the vast majority of Russian intellectuals continues to think more or less consciously not in terms of national but of imperial integrity and grandeur.

For people with such an intimate knowledge of Russian culture, thought, and history as Kirgiz and Kazakh

[14]See, for example, Dmitriy Likhachev in *Literaturnaya Rossiya* (Moscow), Oct. 12, 1988.



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intellectuals, there is nothing surprising in this attitude. At least since the 16th century, Russia has not been a nation-state, and its image in Russian minds remains coextensive with the empire. They would thus probably be quite skeptical (as I am) about a distinction proposed by Roman Szporluk between Russian "empire-savers" and "nation-builders."[15] Spontaneous reactions in Russia proper to the turmoil on the periphery show that this distinction has little more than heuristic value and that the conjunction of an authentically liberal, clear-sighted, and territorially and ethnically limited Russian patriotism—as represented, for example, by Vladimir Balakhonov[16]—remains a rare exception.

In any case, those Kirgiz and Kazakhs who, for reasons already mentioned, are still more moderate than the Baltic peoples and Caucasians, undoubtedly remain aware of the dangers of these Russian attitudes. How could they fail to notice, for example, the telling fact that, during the discussion in the Congress of People's Deputies of the Tbilisi drama of April 9, 1989 (from the Kirgiz-Kazakh viewpoint—a mere reprise of the Alma-Ata repression), "the Georgian deputy spoke and he was applauded, the general [Igor' Rodiyonov, one of the officials most likely responsible for the slaughter] then spoke and the applause was even louder."[17]

Kirgiz and Kazakh intellectuals, duly trained in historical materialism (probably more thoroughly and sincerely than their Russian colleagues), also assiduously scrutinized Russian *statist* attitudes toward minority nations. They know that tsarist and Soviet *apparatchiki* never bothered acknowledging local specificity or adapting—except strategically—to local interests. This utter inflexibility has only recently been examined by Western specialists, notably Andreas Kappeler for early Muscovy,[18] and by Richard Pipes for the ensuing period.[19] In the wake of the ongoing de-ideologization process, it has finally been confirmed for the entire Soviet period: "the theme which emerged most . . . insistently" from the first session of the Congress of People's Deputies "was not the state of crisis [in the Soviet economy] but the long neglected problems of that part of the population which is not Russian."[20]

Kirgiz and Kazakh intellectuals' knowledge of dialectical materialism has also taught them that the reasons for the neglect of the minorities can be found not only in the logic of tsarist autocracy and Konstantin Pobedonostsev's well-known triad of "Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality" (the echoes of which they recently heard from the rostrum of the people's congress as Afghan war veteran S. Chervonopiskiy extolled "*Derzhava, Rodina, Kommunizm*" [the state, the motherland, communism][21]) but directly in the writings of Lenin. In complete contrast to the opinions of this typical "empire-saver," these Kirgiz and Kazakh intellectuals never considered a nation to be a temporary "superstructure" malignantly generated by a reactionary "base" and therefore doomed to disappear together with it. Rather, for them the nation is a steady, healthy infrastructure. Whether consciously or intuitively, they never accepted socialism's ultimate goal of *sliyaniye* (merging)—blissful, voluntary self-annihilation through a de facto adherence to some sort of Russianness.

The accusations of feudalism heaped on Kirgiz and Kazakhs have only strengthened them in their instinctive rejection of statism (*gosudarstvennost'*), which, under the consecutive hypostases of autocracy and the "dictatorship of the proletariat," embraces the eternal nature of a particular kind of political entity in which those who wield power never considered themselves as servants of the people and who view territory not as a homeland but only as an attribute of power. It is, in my judgment, the solemn rejection of Russian statist tradition that motivated the statement by Suleymenov that I chose as an epigraph to this article. Since the Alma-Ata events and at the same pace as "unacceptable" minority claims are throwing Gorbachev—and Russian public opinion at large—back on the leftist track of Leninist brute force (recall the military re-conquest of Central Asia in 1918–23, the recent professionalization of the Ministry of Interior troops under the auspices of a "temporary" presidential rule, and the corporatism inspired by Bukharin, whose theses about a non-ethnic federalism that becomes more efficiently centripetal than "democratic centralism" when faced with the prospect of imperial disintegration have been recently reactivated in the wake of his rehabilitation), the Kirgiz-Kazakh

[15]Roman Szporluk, "Dilemmas of Russian Nationalism," *Problems of Communism* (Washington, DC), July-August 1989, pp. 15–33.

[16]Vladimir Balakhonov in *Russkaya Mysl'* (Paris), June 23, 1989, quoted in ibid., p. 17. Szporluk correctly links imperialism and (relative) liberalism in Russian history. The dismantling of the empire as a precondition for inner democracy is usually advocated by non-Russians in the USSR and/or by foreigners. Note, however, an interesting article by A. Plekhanov in *Literaturnaya Rossiya*, Jan. 5, 1990, and B. Paramonov's comment on it (*Novoye Russkoye Slovo* [New York], Feb. 12, 1990), in which Plekhanov—this "Communist Kipling"—readily admits the necessity for Russia to jettison its empire. Such views, however, seem to have had little impact on Gorbachev's reactions toward Lithuania's proclamation of independence.

[17]*The Soviet Empire*, pp. 7, 73.

[18]Andreas Kappeler, *Russlands erste Nationalitäten* (Russia's First Nationalities), Cologne-Vienna, Bohlau Verlag, 1982.

[19]See fn. 2.

[20]*The Soviet Empire*, p. xxx.

[21]Ibid., p. 1. Note the reply of M. Lauristin (an Estonian): "When you translate the Russian word *derzhava* into Estonian, it comes out as 'empire'." Ibid., p. 2.



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crisis of confidence in Russian culture stopped simmering below the surface and erupted into the open.

There is nothing strange in such a radical reassessment of Russian culture. On the contrary it is a reflection of the historical "law" that the discovery by native intellectuals of the "imperial power's" culture is the strongest possible incentive for a rehabilitation of their own ethnic culture—this being in turn the first decisive step on the road toward nationalism. It remains to be seen whether this inescapable estrangement from Russian culture is likely to spell, in reaction, a similarly inescapable acceptance of the tenets of another component of Kazakh and Kirgiz national identity—Islam.

## The Last "Kafirstan"?

The attitude of Kirgiz and Kazakh intellectuals toward Islam is an issue that has never been raised in public. What is curious is not so much the natives' reluctance to join with the official atheists—or the no less official "clergy"—in the ritual bouts of Islam-bashing (or Islam-cushioning), but their extreme reticence, until recently, to include Islam among the basic components of their ethnic identity. Nevertheless, the Islamic issue is becoming more and more pivotal, since it not only explains a whole series of divergent attitudes with respect to other Central Asian and non-Turkestanian peoples, but to a large extent will probably determine the future of Kirgizia and Kazakhstan.

The first thing to remember is that, after the decisive battle of Talas in 751, this part of Central Asia remained, just like the bulk of Inner Asia, in the *Dar al Harb,* i. e., outside the realm that came to be saturated with Islamic culture and thoroughly integrated into the *Dar al-Islam.* In fact, until another conqueror—the expanding Russian empire—closed in on them at the end of the 18th century, Kazakhs and Kirgiz kept straddling a cultural and political limes. At times they were attracted by Islam, as nomads can be by an urban civilization, and at times they were driven back to it when forced to seek refuge among Islamized kinsmen in the south in response to threats from the Oirats or the Qing dynasty. Yet, the Kirgiz and the Kazakhs were repelled by Islamic theocracy and by attempts of local Muslim oriental despots to extend their sway over them. Especially during the 1750–1898 period—which constitutes the historical referent of today's intellectuals—Islam played a particularly ambiguous role.

On the one hand, Islam was the ideological weapon used by all the enemies of Kazakh and Kirgiz independence: the (Uzbek-Tajik) Kokand khanate, which never stopped trying to colonize the mountainous and steppe hinterland; the (Uighur) rulers in Kashgar, who used Islam as a rallying force in their struggle against the Qing dynasty, but at the expense of local autonomy; and lastly, the Russians themselves, who built the first mosques on the steppe, convinced as they were that a petrified, thought-destroying Islam was in itself a token of submission.

On the other hand, when, during the *Zar Zaman,* which followed the Russian armed colonization in the midst of inter-tribal wars, it became evident that Russia, and not Kokand, constituted the main danger, Islam appeared as a handy shelter, securing and justifying through a religious aloofness from the colonizers the preservation of ethnic specificity. This aspect of Islam, in Alexandre Bennigsen's shrewd definition, provided the Kazakhs and Kirghiz with a "tactical identity."[22] Moreover, Islam became all the more acceptable when, together with the downfall of the Kokand khanate and the kind of despotic scholastic (*qadim*) Islam it represented, the more liberal, enlightened, humanistic (*jadid*) Islam began to seep in from Tataria and Crimea. *Jadid* Islam permitted the combination of national specificity with those "European" values discovered through contacts with the Russians.

The generations of local literati before and immediately after the October Revolution were thus able to elaborate a form of Islam that was duly nationalized and, in its most conscious variety, highly intellectualized. These reformers cared little about the accusations of heterodoxy heaped on them by neighboring Muslim "old believers"; they opposed the despotic theocracy of Bukhara-Samarkand, that mystico-ritualistic brand of Islam into which Sufism had degenerated, and especially that explosive, xenophobic hybrid of both that was later to become known as the "Islam of Bitterness"—Fundamentalism.[23] The reformers strove to integrate into their brand of Islam as many *öz türk* (pure Turkish) values as possible, thus preserving a national tradition of selective syncretism. In so doing, they revived a long-forgotten tradition of "intellectual" Islam—the tolerant, open form of the religion that had blossomed, for example, in similar conditions of cross-cultural contact in Andalusia.

In today's Kirgizia and Kazakhstan, the intellectuals' fidelity to the spiritual legacy of these two generations, the quest for Turkic, *pre*-Islamic "roots" and values, 70 years of secularism, and the high degree of cultural Russification (i.e., Europeanization) all tend to bolster

[22]Alexandre Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, *Muslims of the Soviet Empire,* London, C. Hurst and Co., 1985, p. 35.

[23]Remember Jacques Berque's well-known admonition: "Sow despotism and reap fundamentalism."



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the "Islam of Serenity" that prevails in this part of Central Asia. In other words, Islam is now accepted only inasmuch as it allows the more or less free expression of *türklük* (Turkishness) in a socialist environment, just as socialism had been accepted 70 years ago only inasmuch as it allowed the free expression of the national craving for modernity in an Islamic environment.

This, of course, does not mean that the fundamentalist trend is totally absent from the political landscape of contemporary Kirgizia-Kazakhstan. Although no documentary evidence of this judgment has yet appeared, my view is that a sharp distinction should be made in this regard between "provincial" half-intellectuals and the urban intelligentsia. In contrast to other parts of the Soviet Muslim belt, for the first group, which currently makes up a small minority, Islamic militancy (more than real fundamentalism) is a reaction of despair. This emotion is fueled by the political reticence of Soviet-educated personalities to condemn statist, Tiananmen-like acts of repression inside the Soviet Union, by the stubborn Russian unwillingness to grant real autonomy, and by Western indifference toward their pleas for self-determination. For these provincial half-intellectuals, Islamic militancy is not an expression of an authentic aspect of their nationalism.

Under Brezhnev, the accelerated decay of the central apparatus had allowed a heterogeneous coalition of local economic mafiosi and members of the *nomenklatura* to carve out niches for ethnic elbow-room, thus reducing the appeal of Muslim extremism as a refuge for national specificity. But as the Gorbachev leadership tries, through direct administration, to take full control over a rebellious periphery (and this is what *perestroyka* is all about), fundamentalism has seemed again, as at the beginning of the Basmachi wars, to be the sole, desperate solution. Any further development of Islamic militancy in Kirgizia and Kazakhstan (where it is likely to take specific forms, all excluding the mere "recycling" of Kirgiz and Kazakhs—as some subservient raw material—into a new, holistic *kollektiv*) should thus be considered a reaction against Russo-statist extremism rather than a docile alignment with exaggerated Muslim myths.

For fully Sovietized, secular but ethnic-minded urban intellectuals, Islamic extremism is both a danger for national specificity, heralding something equivalent to the drowning of national identity in a Russian-centered imperial whole, and a strategy used by the center in order to keep them at bay. For years, these intellectuals watched in despair (and in silence) as the Brezhnev leadership, reviving an imperial statist tradition, "physically liquidated" in Afghanistan (as Stalin had done at home) an entire moderate, Westernized social layer similar to themselves and simultaneously consorted with fundamentalist/terrorist satraps throughout the Third World. They then witnessed how the "liberal" Gorbachev team made every possible effort to play off, in Afghanistan again, but also in Pakistan and Iran, the most extremist fanatical factions against the moderate, more or less Western-oriented groups, thus hoping to bog down the national struggles for independence outside the empire into impotent archaism, and the centrifugal, nationhood-into-statehood process inside the empire, into inter-ethnic and social feuds. And then came Alma-Ata, Tbilisi, Dushanbe, and the *nyet* to Lithuanian independence—as usual, crimes mixed with cowardice.

Now, as demonstrated in January 1990 in Baku (exactly one year after Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze extolled in Tehran the Ayatollah Khomeyni's regime!), accusations of "fundamentalism" may be advantageously amalgamated with the classical indictment against "nationalism," thus efficiently blocking inside the Soviet Union (as in Afghanistan) any possible (although quite vague) Western impulse to support the natives' claims for self-determination. Conversely, any protest from the native intellectuals against (real) fundamentalist excesses would likely be viewed as ethnic treason in neighboring Muslim republics.

All in all, for a people with such a superficial and ambiguous Muslim tradition, Islam appears paradoxically as both an aid and as an obstacle to Kirgiz-Kazakh self-determination. In the long run, it widens the abyss between the natives and the Slavs and will most likely cause the long coexistence between Islam and Soviet Marxism-Leninism to erupt into violent confrontation. In the short run, it probably explains why a majority of the secular, modern-minded intellectuals who championed the nation's claim for autonomy continued a wait-and-see approach. They feared both being manipulated by the center and falling directly from the imperial frying pan into the fundamentalist fire.

## Back to the *Öz Türk* Future

Judging from the Kazakh-Kirgiz intellectuals' present devotion to the ideals of their immediate forefathers and their insistence on the rehabilitation of the *Alash Orda* (the Kazakh autonomous government, which existed from 1917 to 1919), one could guess that the solution for extracting themselves from this dilemma would be to favor "regionalism" and its autochthonous, enthusiastically rediscovered *öz türk* values at the expense both of Russian/statist or "internationalist" (in fact, anti-nationalist) tenets and of Third World "solidarity" (in



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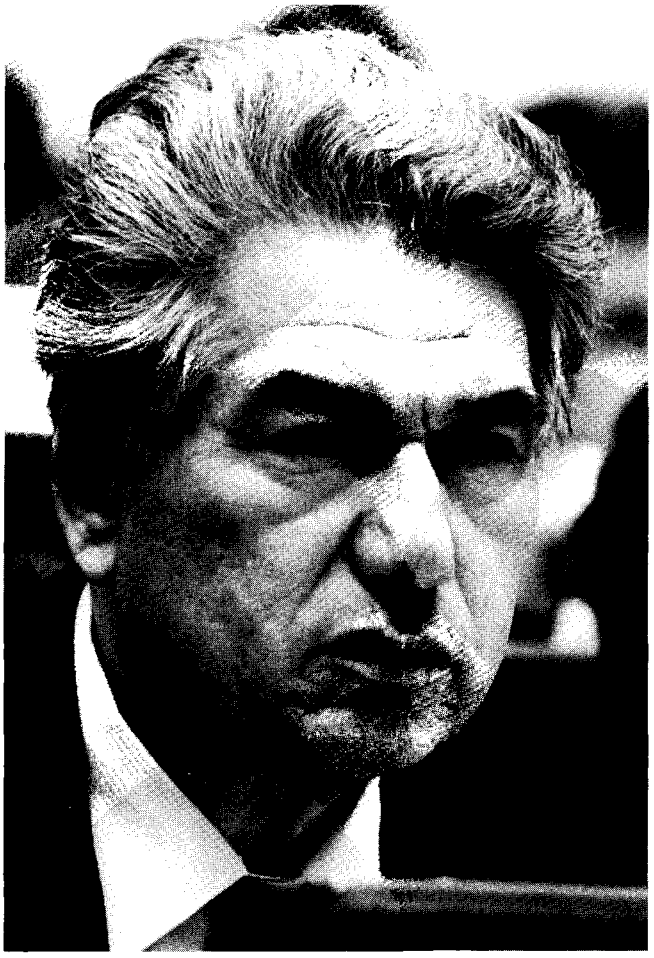

*Chingiz Aitmatov, Kirgiz writer, member of the USSR Presidential Council, and USSR People's Deputy.*

**—V. Sobolev/TASS from SOVFOTO.**

fact, plain anti-Western racism). A craving for "roots" and the desire to cling to them in a period of disarray certainly is a trend that has achieved the broadest allegiance among intellectuals and non-intellectuals.

On the level of the traditional allegory, Suleymenov and Aitmatov make constant references to *Ur-Türkische,* pre-Islamic national grandeur and to clan myths and values. Suleymenov's *Az i Ya* is perceived by all Turkic peoples of the USSR as a rehabilitation of their past culture. Similarly, Aitmatov's recent works extol ethnic decency and continuity through the figure of the *totem maral* (in *The White Boat*); ethnic fidelity and compassion through the sacred she-wolf (in *The Executioner's Block*);[24] and ethnic communion with the whole world through the ever-present, ever-acting Jer-Suu spirit, the goddess of Earth and Water and symbol of Life and Nature (in *The Mother's Field*). More deeply, what is being alluded to and reconstructed is a set of values that is at once traditional and new; in fact, in Marxist terms, they are the "base" of nationhood that could generate the superstructure of statehood.

The multifaceted aspects of this approach to the main philosophic, "civic" (*obshchestvennyy*), and social problems of today can be conveniently analyzed through the folkloric figure of Bak (Happiness). Bak is much more than just an enchanter in charge of bringing luck and success or the kind of supernatural "power" that Muslims call the *barakat*. It is the equivalent of the Western "pursuit of happiness." It ultimately derives from Asan Kaigy's philosophy of compassion, moderation, careful relativism, skeptical pragmatism, disregard for garish grandeur—in a word, from all those virtues of the weak, which, through humor, make this world fit to live in: a mixture of yesterday's Till Eulenspiegel with the wisdom of today's Milan Kundera or Fazil Iskander.

This shrewdness of the little man, this *joie de vivre* of the "Bon Sauvage" rests implicitly (almost never explicitly) on shamanism/animism—an "ecological" conviviality with Nature and all the natural and supernatural beings living in it and by it. Our understanding of shamanism/animism would gain much in accuracy if we stopped regarding it as a kind of ritualistic, rural voodoo and remembered Chokan Valikhanov's definition of it a century ago: "Shamanism . . . is the cult of Nature in general and in particular. Man acts and lives under the influence of Nature. In this respect, shamanism is extreme materialism. But once dead, man becomes a deity: this is extreme spiritualism."[25]

The ontological analogy implied by shamanism among the human, animal, and natural worlds, as well as the natural world's links with the spiritual universe of souls and spirits has anchored Kirgiz and Kazakhs in a patriotic attachment to their native soil, thus ensuring that one of the basic conditions for ethnic awareness is fulfilled. Such an "ecological" teaching, not restricted to Nature, but extended to Man and his past, has also generated a feeling of confidence in the ultimate fate of the nation. This *Weltanschauung,* which has been traced back to the Orkhon inscriptions (the very earliest example of written Turkic; they are dated anywhere from the 7th to the 11th centuries) and is found in the *Manas* epics, cultivates a stubborn but not hostile aloofness from alien influences so as to perpetuate the

[24]G. and V. Imart, "The Procurator, the Native, and the Executioner's Block: An 'Axe Soup'," *Cahiers du Monde Russe et Soviétique* (Paris), January-March 1987, pp. 55–72.

[25]Chokan Valikhanov, *Izbrannyye proizvedeniya* (Selected Works), Alma-Ata, Kazgosizdat, 1958, p. 145.



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—The Library of Congress.

*Kirgiz peasants, circa 1900.*

nation and ensure that it remains unaltered. Psychologically and sociologically, this *Weltanschauung* expresses itself through the value collectively placed upon such qualities as serenity, decency, optimism, and steadfastness in adversity.

These qualities tend to coalesce into a more and more conscious philosophical system that can be termed "secular spiritualism." Such a system expresses and regulates individual and collective behavior so as to preserve the specificity of both the secular and the spiritual. It entails fidelity to the past but not a reliving of the past: modern Kazakh and Kirgiz intellectuals position themselves according to their views on the future of the country, not according to their views on their country's past "cursed problems," as many Russian intellectuals do now, having emerged from 73 years of Bolshevik obscurantism only to rediscover the hackneyed evil spirits of mythical Slavophilism, Russian exclusivism, misplaced messianism, and so forth. For Kirgiz and Kazakhs, the possible temptations of the past are called qadimism, pan-Turkism—and socialism—and all of them have been dispensed with, as they proved to be lethal for ethnic identity.

Not accidentally, these myths are all collectivist. By contrast, the ethnic wisdom of the *kara kalk* (black people)—shepherds, hunters, peasants—and the wisdom of the secular, modernist intellectuals rests on rugged individualism and solid, down-to-earth pragmatism. Even within the (still valid) framework of the clans and tribes, a Kirgiz or a Kazakh remains above all a free (*erkin*) individual, who is expected to accept the need to act responsibly on his own. He is always judged by his own actions, once he has chosen, in the solitude of his conscience, his own means.

This abhorrence of anthill conformism entails in turn a philosophical relativism that favors selective syncretisms. Just as their forefathers had successively integrated into their own culture what they had found fit in Buddhism, Nestorianism, Islam, etc., contemporary Kirgiz and Kazakhs have fully adopted two basic "European" tenets: modernism, seen as a means to emerge from the ghetto of stagnation and backwardness and as an acknowledgment of the universalist character of science; and liberal secularism, felt to be the logical consequence of the former. This secularism, by the way, is less a cultural "loan" than the extension into the realms of religion and ideology of the traditional ethnic recoil from the powers that be and, in particular, from statism.



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The craving for a non-holistic approach to all social/civic problems triggers in turn a collective attitude toward political power that can safely be termed "liberal." Is not the following definition of Western liberalism—one inherited from ancient Greece with its "tribal democracy" of similar small independent communities—at the same time a faithful description of how yesterday's Kirgiz "mountain democracy" worked and a mere paraphrase of the contemporary intellectuals' program for the future?

*The bedrock of liberalism is to be found in the separation of the* société civile *and the State, the latter being the representative and the manager of the former.* Société civile *normally tends to be self-sufficient within itself; its members are not governed by political power or by other members: each one of them is the sole source of his actions. . . . As for the state, it promulgates the laws that guarantee to everyone security and the unhampered pursuit of happiness, as each one views it.*[26]

More specifically, the ethnic features of this liberalism can be made explicit by reference to the symbolic figures of Tolubai Synchy (Tolubai the Analyst) and Akylman. Synchy originally meant expert, a connoisseur of game, hunting, and warfare, and is identified with man's heart. Akylman connotes sober-minded, smart, wise. Akylman is, however, no "professional," no technocrat or "insider" basing his actions on some esoteric knowledge, "historical laws," or "pure rationality." On the contrary, he owes his skill to his respect for tradition and popular wisdom. He is no revolutionary dreaming of making a clean sweep of the past so as to build on a heap of rubble some theoretically pure and perfect society but an "evolutionist," respectful of all the experience accumulated by previous generations. He does not shun the "formalism" of the rule of law, inasmuch as he considers himself to be among the lawmakers and keepers of public order.

Here, the difference with the Russian cast of mind is profound. It was underlined by Peter Chaadayev who, after quoting Cicero, "What is the life of man if the memory of past deeds does not serve to link the present with the past?" went on to add:

*[the] nomads who graze on our steppe are more attached to their deserts than we are to our cities . . . . We are . . . strangers to ourselves. . . . Among us there is absolutely no intimate development, no natural progress. New ideas sweep away old ones because they do not spring from the latter. We are a people who cannot link its thought to any sequence of ideas progressively unfolding and emerging one from the other.*[27]

Chaadayev could have said, together with Vasiliy Klyuchevskiy, Andrey Belyy, Vasiliy Grossman, and others: no ideas except the all-pervading, ever-present, age-old one of autocratic *gosudarstvennost'*.[28]

In Kirgizia and Kazakhstan, where the Supreme Being of the pre-Islamic faith (elements of which still pervade the local form of Islam) was always nearer to Pascal's "revealing Himself to human reason" than to Abraham's fearsome Lord, where nobody ever claimed the dubious honor of speaking in the name of a people chosen by God (or Race or History) to lead some cosmic mission, Kirgiz and Kazakh intellectuals feel proud of never having among their numbers a Sergey Nechayev, Nikolay Tkachev, Andrey Zhelyabov, or Feliks Dzerzhinskiy, nor any *jihad* preacher. They loathe ideology and abstract utopias aimed at driving men like a herd toward some theoretical happiness or toward the fulfillment of some grandiose historical *Gesetzmässigkeiten* and the glory of an artificial *Grossraumstaat* ultimately based on naked force.

Theirs is a polity based on small, autonomous, self-regulated communities linked to one another on the basis of voluntary, equal, and reciprocal relations. It is pragmatically aimed at the most concrete pursuit of happiness through free self-development for each of its members, ruled not by an autocratic organ but by representatives with limited, temporary powers. This propensity for everything popular and national[29] (*el, jurt—milli* in republican Turkish and *narodnoye* in Russian), coupled with the complementary distrust for *mamleket* (others would say *dawlat* and the Russians, *gosudarstvo* [state] or *kazenshchina* [bureaucracy])—does not entail, however, as is often suggested, a congenital unfitness for statehood. The Orkhon inscriptions and the *Manas* epics are full of laments for the loss of national sovereignty ("We used to be a people who had an independent state, where is our own state

[26]P. Manent, *Histoire intellectuelle du libéralisme* (An Intellectual History of Liberalism), Paris, Calmann Lévy, 1987, p. 145.

[27]P. Tchaadaiev, *Lettres philosophiques* (Philosophical Letters), Paris, Librairie des Cinq Continents, 1970, pp. 50–51.

[28]"We are among those nations which seem not to be an integral part of the human species, but which exist only to give some great lesson to the world." Ibid., p. 52.

[29]The *logical* link between "tribal democracy" and shamanism has been reasserted by Hamayon (op. cit.), who reminds us that Chingiz Khan, upon transforming himself into a cosmic potentate, eliminated Kököchü, the shaman who had helped him when he was a mere clan chieftain.



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now?"[30]) and full of praise for the hero who restores it ("Here we are at long last—a people with a khan of its own"[31]). Simply, as emphasized by most students of the autochthonous Turkic polity,[32] the *öz türk* concept of the state is as different from the oriental despotism of yesterday's Kokand khanate—or today's Russian imperial "barracks socialism"—as mountain democracy was from Ottoman power.

It is also relevant to note, as we are reminded by Roberte Hamayon,[33] that the Orkhon Turkic and Mongol concept of *törü* ("mode of government" and "state law" in the epics) is etymologically linked to the old word for "marriage," i. e., to an alliance, an agreement on equal terms, *not* to any idea of submission, sway, or might. It is futile to point out to those intellectuals that these *öz türk* ideals do not necessarily correspond to the historical truth: they are the emotional and now politically relevant answer to the disdainful accusations of feudalism heaped on their past and a key aspect of the political platform that is now being elaborated.

These ideals signal an ever more obvious rift with a Russian nation still unable to untangle its own fate from recurrent "great power" grand designs and thus appear to transcend mere inter-ethnic squabbles and opposed economic interests. On the one hand, these ideals reveal a certain ontological incompatibility with an unviable imperial system that sooner or later is likely to lead to a full-scale political break. On the other hand, they share numerous similarities (unsuspected until recently) with Western ideals.

## Conclusion

It can now be safely said that the exemplary (because of its complexity) Kirgiz-Kazakh case serves to dampen the naïve optimism of those who expect the USSR under Gorbachev's helm to be able and willing, through a smooth conversion to democracy, to untie the Gordian knot of opposed nationalisms. Equally naïve is the assumption of an imminent imperial breakdown: what is now happening on the Soviet southern periphery smacks more of 1905 than of 1917. No doubt, as is abundantly demonstrated by the histories of other empires, national liberation struggles can be crushed militarily and even thrown psychologically off balance for a while. But the mere fact that they crop up again and again means that the imperial structure is not viable and, consequently, that the world community should prepare itself for sweeping changes.

In contrast to the Lithuanians, the Kazakhs and Kirgiz still lack both a clear program and a definite strategy to take advantage of some sudden window of opportunity. Yet, there is a growing gap between the Kirgiz and Kazakhs, who are more and more resentful of their subordinate position, and the Russians, who are refusing to accept that the logical consequence of reform is the loss of their privileged position, if only psychologically. While the Kirgiz and Kazakhs increasingly realize that the rift between the two communities is unbridgeable, they still hope they will be given the possibility of escaping—through a dialogue more in conformity with their ethnic habits—the upheaval inherent to the collapse of an empire.

It is thus vital that Westerners understand that the Kirgiz and Kazakhs share with them an immediate appreciation of what liberal nation-states are. After all, "there is ample evidence that Soviet Muslims desire contact with the Western world, bypassing Russia and Russians,"[34] and therefore we should help those who can reconcile us with a confusing Muslim world and whose inborn aptitude for combining the best in both Western and Oriental traditions is alone likely to spare us the horrors of two, interlocking fundamentalist despotisms.

[30]Kül Tigin's inscription, East-9; see Talât Tekin, *A Grammar of Orkhon Turkic*, Bloomington, IN, Indiana University Publications, 1968, pp. 233, 264.
[31]"Here We Are at Long Last," *Manas*, Frunze, Kyrgyzmambas, 1958, p. 71.
[32]Grousset, op. cit., pp. 49–65.
[33]Hamayon, op. cit., p. 215; and Tekin, op. cit., pp. 385–86.
[34]Alexandre Bennigsen, "Soviet Muslims and the Muslim World," in S. Enders Wimbush, Ed., *Soviet Nationalities in Strategic Perspective*, London, Croom Helm, 1985, p. 223.



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# The "Karabakh Syndrome" and Azerbaijani Politics

**Mark Saroyan**

In future histories of the Soviet Union under Mikhail Gorbachev, Azerbaijan will hold a place of particular distinction. The Azerbaijani republic will be remembered as one of the first sites where independent political forces mobilized as a popular movement in the spirit of *perestroyka*. At the same time, Azerbaijan will be recorded in historical annals as the first republic to experience an acute collapse of the Stalinist system of party rule and Brezhnevist stagnation along with the violent repression of political forces militating for a new, Gorbachev-style Soviet politics.

The process of reform initiated by the Gorbachev coalition in Moscow is frequently perceived as a top-down process begun at the center and extending to the periphery. By contrast, the impulse for political change in Azerbaijan came not from Moscow but from Azerbaijan's own periphery—the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (NKAO), a largely rural, Armenian-populated province situated on the republic's western border. Using the Gorbachevian language of *perestroyka*, *glasnost'*, and democratization, Armenian deputies to the region's provincial council gathered on February 20, 1988, in the administrative center, Stepanakert, to articulate in legal form their decades-old aspirations for union with Armenia. The ensuing contradictions of change in Azerbaijan, marked by tense political struggle and punctuated with bloody intercommunal conflict, reached a climax with a final round of anti-Armenian violence in Baku in mid-January 1990. The massive intervention of Soviet troops in Azerbaijan's capital on January 19–20, 1990, brought to a close the initial period of *perestroyka* in Azerbaijan.

This article examines the origins of political change in contemporary Azerbaijan, the troubles attending the efforts to promote a democratizing politics, and the contradictory imperatives of reform in a republic with a multi-ethnic population and competing visions of *perestroyka*. While much of the experience of the past two years speaks to the unique historical and demographic conditions in which a new kind of politics emerged, developed, and ultimately failed in the republic, the Azerbaijani case holds important lessons for the reform process in other Soviet republics.

As in Azerbaijan, politics in the Gorbachev era in all the Soviet republics is a complicated process of negotiation, compromise, and recurring conflict involving the local and central apparatuses of the Communist party, newly forming yet quite powerful independent political associations, and populations that have largely failed to experience the benefits of a democratizing polity and a marketizing economy. Given the multinational composition of the populations in the republics—aggravated by the unequal distribution of political power, cultural prestige, and economic resources—the implications of ethnic differences inform the larger set of complex and troublesome challenges to the success of reform in the respective republics and the Soviet Union as a whole. It is thus the depth of the similarities, and not the equally important differences, that draws attention to Azerbaijan as an example of the ways in which conflicts between the old system and an emergent new politics can result in failed, and potentially violent, outcomes.

## Institutional Origins of Contemporary Ethnic Politics

One of the fundamental institutional innovations car-

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*On January 19, 1990, in the Azerbaijani region of Khandlar, nationalist activists block the progress of a Soviet column of armored vehicles—part of the force sent to quell ethnic rioting in the republic.*

**—Reuters/Bettmann.**

ried out by the Soviet leadership in the wake of the October Revolution was the linking of ethnicity, territory, and political administration in the process of state-building. Termed "national statehood," the Soviet image of a new form of the state was put into practice through the creation of a hierarchical system of ethno-territorial administrative divisions extending from the national republic down to the national district (*okrug*). The building blocks of the new Soviet federation thus did not simply replicate the geographic divisions existing under tsarist dominion. Rather, the Soviet federal system fostered new, national-territorial formations that would contribute to the consolidation of ethnic identity by institutionalizing nationality at the level of the state.

The Soviet process of nation-building was planned in order to coincide with the formation of the novel national-state structures.[1] Cultural organizations, from state publishing houses and ministries of culture and education to unions of writers, artists, architects, and others, were established to aid in creating new cultures or, at times, renovating ancient cultures. Primacy in Soviet cultural construction was accorded to the "indigenous" national community of the given national-territorial administration, referred to as the "titular nationality" in Western Sovietological discourse.

In Azerbaijan, for instance, the artistic unions engaged chiefly in organizing and regulating the production of a specifically Azerbaijani culture. As a political corollary to the beneficial arrangements provided for the "indigenous" nationality, other national communities living in the republic, irrespective of how long they had lived on the territory of the given republic, were considered "non-indigenous" and essentially excluded from the broader process of republic-based national-cultural development. Iranian-speaking Talysh and

[1]For a fuller elaboration of this issue and others discussed in this section, see my "Beyond the Nation-State: Culture and Ethnic Politics in Soviet Transcaucasia" *Soviet Union/Union soviétique* (Atlanta), Vol. 15, Nos. 2–3, 1988, pp. 219–31.



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Kurds, and Dagestani groups such as Lezghis and Avars, as well as other smaller ethnic communities resident in the Azerbaijani republic, were assimilated into the dominant Azerbaijani nationality. National cultural development for other communities, such as the Armenians, with their stronger sense of ethnic identity forged in national institutions with a longer history, was frequently restricted or simply neglected.

At the level of the national republic, then, traditional social identities of the "indigenous" community, based on clan, region, urban residence, and even class, gave way under Soviet policies to the formation of a modern, overarching ethnic identity developed through new political and cultural institutions inscribed in the national republic. The state's role in consolidating nation-building is especially evident in the case of Azerbaijan, where with the exception of the short-lived independent Republic of Azerbaijan (1918-1920), there was no prior history of independent, specifically Azerbaijani state-building.

Soviet power not only provided the Azerbaijanis with their first long-term and extensive experience in national-state building, but it also gave them their name. In the late 19th century, Azerbaijani intellectuals had engaged in lengthy debates over how to name their nation, since they were variously referred to as Caucasian Turks, Muslims, or Tatars in official tsarist usage, as well as in local Russian and Armenian historical and literary sources.[2] Early Soviet terminology identified them as "Turk." Beginning in the late 1930's, however, the indigenous population of Azerbaijan was re-identified as "Azerbaijani" (in Azerbaijani, "*azärbayjanli*").[3]

A program of "nativization" (*korenizatsiya*) complemented the nation-building process by fostering the creation of a native ethnic leadership through target programs of recruitment and training for service in the national republic's political, economic, and cultural administration. *Korenizatsiya* as a kind of institutionalized program of "affirmative action" for the "indigenous" nationality has resulted in the formation of national elites in the national republics. Nativization also resulted in the political disenfranchisement of so-called non-indigenous groups. This policy proved to be especially important in legitimating Soviet power among the Azerbaijanis of the republic, who in the pre-revolutionary period, had been dominated politically by the Tsarist Russian administrative elite and economically by a mix of mainly Armenian and Russian entrepreneurs.[4] The establishment of Soviet authority in the region thus served to disenfranchise the Russian and, especially, Armenian elites while it empowered Azerbaijanis in the fields of political administration and economic management. However, these Soviet-sponsored political institutions and practices created conditions for the emergence of ethnic-based conflicts under a more liberalized regime.

## Karabakh and the Origins of Political Change in Azerbaijan

Several years into Gorbachev's program of political and economic reform, Azerbaijan was one of many republics that remained aloof from the processes of renewal emerging throughout the Soviet Union.[5] Kämrän Baghïrov, the first secretary of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan, was quite representative of the attitudes of his party organization. In addresses to republic and all-Union party meetings, he barely paid lip service to *perestroyka*, *glasnost'*, and democratization. In practice, reform touched neither the Azerbaijani party apparatus and governmental administration nor Azerbaijani society as a whole.

Although independent political forces have usually emerged in urban areas, a coalition for political renewal in Azerbaijan first developed among the Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh—a remote rural area along the republic's western border. The fact that the first and most persistent bearers of a *glasnost'*-style political activism in Azerbaijan emerged not among the majority Azerbaijanis but from within the Armenian population of the NKAO would set the process of political change in the republic along a troubled, contradictory path.

The movement for the union of NKAO with the Armenian republic is often cast in terms of a territorial conflict between the two neighboring republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan. And the Karabakh movement did indeed develop into an unprecedented inter-republican crisis that by the fall of 1989 had grown into full-scale warfare between the two republics. However, contrary to Azerbaijani critics who have sought to paint the movement solely as a product of foreign Armenian agitation and intervention in Azerbaijani affairs promoted by nationalist Armenian political organizations operating out-

[2]On this debate, see E. M. Akhmedov, *Filosofiya azerbaydzhanskogo prosveshcheniya* (The Philosophy of Azerbaijani Education), Baku, Azerneshr, 1983.

[3]On the ethnonymic change, see Azerbaijani historian Süleyman Äliyarov's comments in "Our Query," *Azärbayjan* (Baku), No. 7, 1988, p. 176.

[4]Ronald G. Suny, *The Baku Commune, 1917-1918: Class and Nationality in the Russian Revolution*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1972.

[5]On the lack of *glasnost'* in Azerbaijan, see Elizabeth Fuller, "The Transcaucasian Republics in 1987," Radio Free Europe-Radio Liberty, *Radio Liberty Research* (Munich), RL 8/88, Dec. 30, 1987.



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side the republic and the Soviet Union,[6] the movement for Karabakh's union with Armenia was initiated—and has been continued—primarily by the Armenians living in the NKAO itself.[7] Given the national-state formation of the Soviet Union as outlined above, Karabakh Armenian arguments for union with the Armenian republic can be seen more as an autochthonous, rational response to contemporary institutional constraints than as the amorphous eruption of latent, primordial ethnic and religious sentiments.[8]

Indeed, the list of Armenian complaints in the cultural sphere, from underfunding of local Armenian education to the lack of Armenian-language textbooks and television broadcasts, are comprehensible in an institutional context in which the state's subsidization of cultural development favored the Azerbaijanis over other ethnic communities resident in Azerbaijan. In this regard, the dramatic multiplication of demands for more cultural ties between Karabakh and the Armenian republic reflects the historical lack of attention that Azerbaijani republican ministries have accorded specifically Armenian interests in the sphere of cultural production as much as it does the desire for union with Armenia. In a recent exposé on the extent of cultural disenfranchisement in Karabakh, instructively entitled "Why and How All This Started," an Armenian cinematographer recounted a story of the shelving of a documentary film dedicated to the 60th anniversary of the NKAO. The reason, the film-maker notes, was that the film was considered by authorities in Baku to be "too Armenian" in its content, despite the fact that it recounted the history of a region with a majority Armenian population.[9] A similar pattern was reflected in the complaints of Armenian writers and journalists in Baku, who argued that Armenian national themes were not considered a legitimate field of local cultural expression in the Azerbaijani capital.[10]

The leitmotif of cultural disenfranchisement runs throughout the Karabakh Armenian movement, but this should not turn one's attention away from equally important issues of political and economic autonomy. In fact, one of the earliest Armenian *samizdat* texts, originating from Stepanakert in 1962, was much more strident and expansive on economic problems than on cultural issues in the NKAO. The complaints raised in this document range from underinvestment in the NKAO economy to numerous examples of the subordination of local enterprises to the administrative control of organizations and other enterprises located in Baku and in other cities outside the autonomous oblast.[11]

Almost three decades later, these same issues form the nucleus of contemporary Armenian claims to economic autonomy in the NKAO. Manipulating the Gorbachevian language of *khozraschet* (self-financing and economic self-management), Armenian-dominated enterprises in the NKAO have chosen to develop economic ties with Armenia at the expense of administrative linkages with the Azerbaijani economy. Thus, local enterprises have increasingly sought to produce manufactured goods and other commodities not according to the Azerbaijani state plan but in line with market and planning needs in Armenia.

The virtual independence of economic decision-making emerging in the NKAO has put an ironic twist on economic demands emanating from Baku. While Azerbaijani economists are arguing for greater devolution of economic decision-making to the republic level,[12] the refusal of NKAO enterprises to supply Azerbaijani commodity markets and the negotiation by them of contracts with firms based in the Armenian republic have elicited Azerbaijani condemnation of local economic autonomy in the NKAO as a violation of Azerbaijan's sovereignty and calls for the reassertion of republic control over the production and distribution of goods in Karabakh.

In political affairs, the Karabakh movement threatened the Azerbaijani republic not just with Armenian nationalism but also with independent political activity by traditional organs of the party and state control apparatus. One of the first ethnic-based splits in the Communist Party apparatus under Gorbachev took place between the Communist Party of Azerbaijan and the once-subordinate Armenian-controlled NKAO oblast party committee (*obkom*). Despite initial hesitation of party organizations in the NKAO, by mid-March of 1988, the NKAO *obkom* publicly backed the February 20, 1988, request by the NKAO oblast soviet of people's deputies for union with Armenia. Faced with a lack of

[6]For an argument on the Karabakh movement's origins in foreign Armenian nationalist circles, see the article symptomatically titled "Evil Intentions, Foreign Voices," *Kommunist* (Baku), Nov. 25, 1988.

[7]For useful collections of documents on the origins and development of the Karabakh movement, see *The Karabakh File*, Cambridge, MA, Zoryan Institute, 1988, and *Artsakhean Taregrutiown* (Artsakh Annals), Los Angeles, CA, Asbarez, 1988.

[8]For a critique of the view that stresses the ethnic and religious origins of the Karabakh crisis, see my "The Armenian Protests: Is It Passion or Politics?" *Deadline* (New York), July-August 1988, pp. 8–11.

[9]*Khorhrdayin Hayastan* (Yerevan), Feb. 7, 1990.

[10]I interviewed Armenian writers and journalists on this subject in Baku in autumn 1987.

[11]Claire Mouradian translates portions of this document in her "The Nagorno-Karabakh Problem or Difficulties with the 'Friendship of Peoples' in the Transcaucasus," *Slovo* (Paris), No. 7, 1985, pp. 53–82.

[12]For an Azerbaijani argument for more economic autonomy from Moscow, see *Kommunist*, May 1, 1989.



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positive response from Moscow and Baku, NKAO political authorities have increasingly taken the management of local political affairs into their own hands.

## Karabakh as Catalyst for Ethnic Activism in Azerbaijan

The NKAO Armenian movement and subsequent development of a political crisis over Karabakh catalyzed Azerbaijani consciousness not only about events in the troubled region but also about broader issues facing the Azerbaijan SSR. Nonetheless, Azerbaijanis recognize the pivotal role that Armenian militancy has played in informing Azerbaijani national and political self-awareness. In a revealing commentary given to a Turkish newspaper reporter, an Azerbaijani journalist provided a concise reflection on this phenomenon:

*We had a weak sense of solidarity in the past and minded our own business. The developments [in the NKAO, Armenia, and Azerbaijan] have helped to unite us. A national feeling and state of awareness have emerged in the community for the first time. We had not observed this in the past. I can say that Azerbaijan has changed. It is as if the Armenian attitude has awakened the people and moved them to safeguard their rights.*[13]

Even a brief review of the emergence of independent Azerbaijani politics reflects the deep and decisive way that the Armenian movement has informed a range of issues brought up by Azerbaijanis. The reactive, at times even emulative, character of the Azerbaijani movement with regard to the Armenians is clear. At protests in November 1988, for instance, Azerbaijani militants demanded that some form of autonomy be established for Armenia's Azerbaijanis on the model of the NKAO in Azerbaijan. Such demands were subsequently reflected in the arguments of Azerbaijani intellectuals published in the republic press.[14]

The pattern of reaction to Armenian activism at times led to irony. An Azerbaijani journalist, commenting on the Azerbaijani response to Armenian efforts to extract themselves from Azerbaijani rule, argued that the Azerbaijanis wanted "the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh to respect Azerbaijani laws. They are acting as if they were free."[15] In this sense, Armenian "freedom" was seen as a direct challenge to Azerbaijani interests in the republic.

Azerbaijanis often attempted to downplay the actual stimulus that motivated the candid expression of their concern by shifting focus from the NKAO to other problems in the republic. The Azerbaijani poet Hidayat, for example, contrasted the poor socio-economic conditions about which the Armenians of the NKAO were complaining to the situation in Baku, which, he argued, was much more serious than in the autonomous province.[16] Similarly, after the massacre of Armenians in the industrial town of Sumgait in February 1988, the idea of "Sumgait" emerged in the Azerbaijani imagination not as a tragedy of anti-Armenian violence but as a manifestation of the city's endemic social, economic, and environmental problems.[17] Azerbaijani journalists focused their attention on the destructive effects of industrial pollution in the area and the simultaneous need for the development of the local economy and the expansion of public services.[18] In the spring of 1989, Azerbaijani television broadcast a program on Sumgait that was much commented on in the republic press.[19] Entitled "Death Zone" (*Ölü zona*), the broadcast ironically ignored the massacre of Armenians and other civilians in Sumgait to focus on the fatal effects of industrial pollution on the city's residents.

## The Politics of Party Paralysis

Despite the quick pace of events in early 1988, from the beginning of the popular movement in Karabakh and the massacre of Armenian civilians at the end of February to Moscow's announcement of a program of social and economic development for the NKAO on March 26, Azerbaijani political authorities were slow to respond to pressures at home for a more active stance with regard to the Armenian movement. At meetings of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan in late April, party activists, led by First Secretary Baghïrov, focused primarily on the serious economic situation facing the republic and called for more party

[13] *Milliyet* (Istanbul), Nov. 21, 1988, translated in Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Daily Report: Soviet Union* (Washington, DC—hereafter, *FBIS-SOV*), Nov. 28, 1988, p. 65.

[14] For examples, see *Ädäbiyyat vä Injäsänät* (Baku), Nov. 25, 1988; and *Kommunist*, Dec. 3, 1988.

[15] AFP report trans. in *FBIS-SOV*, Nov. 25, 1988, p. 37.

[16] *Azärbayjan Qänjläri* (Baku), Nov. 5, 1988.

[17] In some cases, prominent Azerbaijani intellectuals accused Armenians themselves of organizing the Sumgait massacre to gain public sympathy. For example, see Ziya Buniyatov, "Why Sumgait [Happened]," *Azärbayjan SSR Elmlär Akademiyasïnïn khäbärläri. Tarikh, fälsäfä, vä hügug seriyasï* (Baku), No. 2, 1989.

[18] On environmental pollution, see *Azärbayjan Qänjläri*, Sept. 10, 17, and 22, 1988.

[19] For example, *Kommunist*, May 5, 1989.



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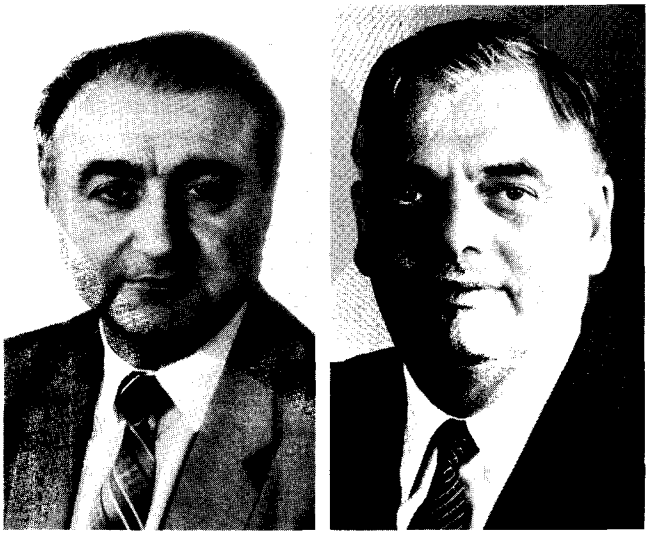

*Kämrän Baghïrov, former first secretary of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan, and Äbdülrähman Väzirov, who was named to replace him in May 1988 in an attempt—ultimately unsuccessful—to reform the party leadership and restore the party's credibility as a defender of Azerbaijani interests.*

**—TASS from Sovfoto.**

control and for improvement in the provision of social services.

But the ongoing political conflict over the status of the NKAO soon fully discredited Baghïrov as republic party chief. At a May party plenum, the party named Äbdülrähman Väzirov, a former Komsomol official and Soviet ambassador to Pakistan, to replace Baghïrov as party first secretary. Väzirov faced a double challenge. On the one hand, he had to revitalize the party organization in line with the general process of political and economic reform occurring in the rest of the country. On the other hand, he had to restore social order and attempt to rebuild the Azerbaijani population's confidence in a party that seemed to have been incapable of defending Azerbaijani national interests from the threat of Armenian nationalism in the NKAO and in Armenia.

Väzirov's vision of renewal in both the party and society developed along fairly conservative, almost predictable lines in the following months. The outlines of his strategy were reflected in his address to the 19th All-Union CPSU Conference in July. Almost a third of his speech was devoted to articulating Azerbaijani positions on the Karabakh crisis, but he also focused on the political destabilization brought about by the party's paralysis and the accumulation of unresolved social and economic problems in the republic. Remarking on the justified dissatisfaction of the Azerbaijani population, he emphasized the need to "strengthen the leading role of the party" and argued that "the Azerbaijani people ties its hopes and future to the Communist Party." In this regard, one of his proposed solutions to the current crisis was the reinvigoration of the party apparatus. Reminiscent of Yegor Ligachev's position at the CPSU's 27th congress, Väzirov stressed the need for cadre renewal through improved recruitment and training and the introduction of cadre exchanges and rotation of duties.[20]

During the late summer and fall of 1988, Väzirov began to pursue his program for the renewal of the party. In a short two and one-half months, 43 secretaries of district and city party committees, including 22 party first secretaries and 17 chairmen of urban executive committees, were replaced.[21] A Central Committee plenum in mid-November adopted a massive reorganization and streamlining of the Azerbaijani party's central apparatus, to take effect from the start of 1989. The number of Central Committee secretaries was cut from six to five, and—mirroring the reduction of departments of the CPSU Central Committee—Väzirov reduced the number of departments of the Azerbaijani Central Committee from 16 to six. Viktor Polyanichko, formerly a high-ranking Soviet political adviser in Afghanistan, was appointed to the post of second secretary of the Azerbaijani party and named head of its reorganized Organizational Party Work Department. In the course of the restructuring, the party slashed its regular staff by 30 percent—from 194 to 136 functionaries. In addition, as with the CPSU apparatus in Moscow, new Central Committee commissions were established, including an Oversight Commission to monitor the activity of the republic's city and district-level party organizations. The organizational structure of city and district party committees was also streamlined.[22]

Väzirov sought to renew the party's leadership in the social sphere by initiating a series of new programs. The most pressing problems involved economic development and investment, especially in the poorer rural and mountainous regions. At the Central Committee's August plenum, party leaders called for the creation of new jobs in a number of the republic's districts.[23] In October, the party announced programs for the social and economic development of the Nakhchïvan autonomous republic (ASSR), as well as of districts encompassing the plains portion of Karabakh (as opposed to

[20] *Azärbayjan Qänjläri*, July 2, 1988.
[21] Report by R. Y. Zeynalov, *Kommunist*, Nov. 15, 1988.
[22] Väzirov report on restructing of party, in ibid.
[23] The need for more employment opportunities was emphasized throughout 1988 and 1989, including at sessions of the Azerbaijan CP's Commission on National Relations. See, for example, *Azärbayjan Qänjläri*, Sept. 20, 1988.



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Karabakh's mountainous portion, the NKAO).[24] The party also devoted attention to the republic's urban areas. An important new housing program designed to overcome the backlog in the provision of apartments in both urban and rural districts was announced by Väzirov simultaneously with the Central Committee's plenum of mid-November. One month later, the Azerbaijan Council of Ministers acted on a recommendation from the party's Central Committee in announcing a five-year program of social and economic measures for Sumgait. The development scheme, with a total price tag of 500 million rubles, allocated nearly 300 million rubles for investment in public housing and social services.[25]

Despite party restructuring and announcements of new social programs, mass rallies erupted in the Azerbaijani capital on November 17, 1988. These stemmed from popular dissatisfaction over a number of issues that the Azerbaijani party and state officials were failing to address, including that of asserting republic control over the NKAO. In particular, Azerbaijanis were angered by the construction of new facilities in the NKAO's Topkhana forest preserve by an aluminum enterprise headquartered in the Armenian republic. The Topkhana construction, authorized by Armenian officials in the NKAO but not by Baku, was in the Azerbaijani view yet another Armenian violation of the Azerbaijan republic's sovereignty.[26] A collective letter written by four Azerbaijani intellectuals reflected the public's demands that the CPSU Central Committee and the USSR Supreme Soviet assure Azerbaijan's sovereign rights in the NKAO in line with the central government's confirmation of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity expressed on July 18, 1988.[27] At the same time, Azerbaijani demonstrations were fueled by fears that an upcoming session of the USSR Supreme Soviet on constitutional reform would lay the groundwork for an eventual transfer of the NKAO to the Armenian republic.

The rallies and demonstrations gained intensity and spread in widening circles after the USSR Supreme Court's November 21 announcement of a death sentence for an Azerbaijani involved in the Sumgait massacre of February 1988. Large meetings were staged in Baku, Kirovabad, Nakhchïvan, Shäki, and Zagatala, and smaller rallies and demonstrations took place in Shamkhor, Äli Bayramlï, Qädäbäy, Minqächevir, and Gutgashen.[28] News from the NKAO and Moscow and fears of the persecution of Azerbaijani citizens in Armenia proper led to mass dismissals of Armenians from jobs and bouts of violence against Armenians throughout Azerbaijan. In the city of Kirovabad, home to some 50,000 Armenians, Azerbaijani attacks on Armenian neighborhoods and the expulsion of Armenian residents from their homes developed into battles with government troops. A similar pattern of anti-Armenian violence and confrontations with troops was repeated in Baku and other Azerbaijani districts having Armenian minority populations. The result was a mass exodus of Armenians from the republic.

## Reasserting Party Control

The "agitated days of November," as the mass protests and violence came to be known in the Azerbaijani press, reflected the political quandary facing Azerbaijan. A movement of mass protest developed in reaction to Armenian actions in the NKAO, coupled with the reluctance of Azerbaijani officialdom to address contradictory Armenian and Azerbaijani demands, had led not only to the intensification of inter-ethnic animosity and violence but also to a widening gulf between the party and an increasingly activist Azerbaijani society. At the same time, however, Azerbaijani militants were as yet unable to organize themselves into a coherent political movement, and the party was able to take advantage of this to suppress the troublesome independent associations and to reassert itself politically.

Moscow's establishment of a "special government administration" for the NKAO on January 12, 1989, which came as a belated measure to forestall the continuation of months of inter-communal violence in the region, helped to defuse tensions temporarily in the autonomous oblast as well as in the rest of Azerbaijan. The installation in the NKAO of a governmental commission under the leadership of the Kremlin's Karabakh troubleshooter, Arkadiy Vol'skiy, was greeted by the Azerbaijani party as an important measure for bringing greater control to the oblast. Azerbaijani officials emphasized that the establishment of the Vol'skiy commission meant that the NKAO was to remain within the Azerbaijan SSR, and they welcomed the subsequent dissolution of recalcitrant, Armenian-dominated local party and government organizations in the NKAO.[29] These steps gave the Azerbaijan party a brief respite during

[24]On Nakhchïvan, see *Bakinskiy Rabochiy* (Baku) Oct. 22 and Nov. 20, 1988; on the plains Karabakh development project, to include the districts of Aghdam, Aghjabädi, Jäbrayïl, Mirbäshir, Füzuli, and Gasïm-Ismayïllï, see ibid., Oct. 26, 1988.

[25]Ibid., Dec. 9, 1988.

[26]Ibid., Nov. 18, 19, and 23, 1988. On the historical meaning of Topkhana for the Azerbaijanis, see ibid., Nov. 20, 1988; and *Kommunist*, Nov. 23 and 24, 1988.

[27]The letter is reprinted in *Bakinskiy Rabochiy*, Nov. 30, 1988.

[28]Among the reports of rallies throughout the republic, see ibid., Nov. 23, 1988.

[29]*Kommunist*, Jan. 14, 1989; and Väzirov's comments in ibid., Jan. 15, 1989.



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*People's deputies from Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast seen at the May 31, 1989, session of the Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR: from left to right, Arkadiy Vol'skiy (head of a special commission appointed to administer that troubled region of Azerbaijan), V. Bagrielyan, and Z. Balayan.*

**—TASS from Sovfoto.**

which to concentrate on rebuilding itself internally and externally.

On the internal front, the party took its cue from Moscow's condemnation of the involvement of party cadres in the violence and rioting of the November days.[30] Three full and two candidate members of the republic party's Bureau, as well as several members of the Central Committee, were retired.[31] Similarly, several leading cadres in the republic Komsomol were stripped of their positions in the youth organization's Bureau and Central Committee.[32] In addition, Väzirov undertook a more broad-ranging purge of the party and security organs during December 1988 and early January 1989. Commenting vaguely on the extent of dismissals from the republic's KGB and Ministry of Internal Affairs, Väzirov noted that 2,532 cadres, including 612 in positions of leadership, were censured by the party and 222 officials were removed from their posts. A total of 65 people were expelled from the ranks of the party and the Komsomol.[33] However, despite the broad criticisms and forced retirements, many party functionaries who had been involved in the unrest apparently remained in their positions.[34]

Preparations for March elections to the new USSR Congress of People's Deputies, a process that in many other republics provided unprecedented opportunities for the exercise of popular power, in Azerbaijan reflected the regime's continued conservatism. Complete election results were never published in the republic press, but party officials boasted of the high proportion of "worker," "peasant," and "women" candidates—in many cases far above the all-Union averages for these categories.[35] This, and the reported 98.5 percent public participation in the March 26 balloting,[36] evoked a Brezhnevist, not a Gorbachevian, image.

Although incomplete press coverage makes it difficult to judge accurately, there appear to have been certain discrepancies between the number of candidates elected at the pre-electoral meetings and those formally registered as candidates in the NKAO by the electoral commissions.[37] A review of local press accounts of discussion meetings and registration of candidates and of election results published in Moscow reveals the overall conservative trends in Azerbaijan's 63 electoral districts. Leading Azerbaijani party and government officials were registered as candidates in 15 districts, and lesser officials ran in five others. With the sole exception of party chief Väzirov, party officials never ran unopposed. Yet in 10 of 11 cases, Communist Party officials won their election campaigns against lesser officials or workers from factories or farms.

Six districts had single-candidate elections: these included the candidacy of Väzirov in the Imishli national-territorial electoral district and of Vladimir Chernavin, commander-in-chief of the Soviet navy and a deputy USSR minister of defense, in the Länkäran territorial district. In the Imishli district, Väzirov's candidacy was discussed with those of two other individuals, the first secretary of the Füzuli district party committee and the head of the party organization at a local collective farm. Rather than challenge the republic party chief, the latter two nominees withdrew from the contest and backed Väzirov as the district's sole candidate. During the election campaign following the electoral commissions' official registration of candidates, the press highlighted visits by Väzirov and other party-backed candidates to their respective districts for meetings with voters.[38]

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[30] *Bakinskiy Rabochiy*, Dec. 7, 1988.

[31] *Azärbayjan Qänjläri*, Jan. 3, 1989.

[32] Ibid., Jan. 7, 1989.

[33] *Kommunist*, Jan. 15, 1989. At a press conference held in Moscow, representatives of the USSR Ministry of Internal Affairs reported the dismissal of 100 leading and rank-and-file functionaries of the Azerbaijani Ministry of Internal Affairs. *Krasnaya Zvezda* (Moscow), Feb. 8, 1989.

[34] *Azärbayjan Qänjläri*, Jan. 3, 1989.

[35] *Kommunist*, Mar. 14 and 26, 1989.

[36] Ibid., Apr. 5, 1989.

[37] The pre-electoral campaign and candidate registration was reported only for the Shusha district, the only part of the NKAO with an Azerbaijani majority.

[38] For an account of Väzirov's visit to Imishli, see *Kommunist*, Mar. 5, 1989. For a similar story run on party second secretary Polyanichko, see ibid., Mar. 24, 1989.



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In a number of cases, three and even four candidates ran for a single seat, but most of these were in the 11 districts where contests were among females and often quite young peasants and workers. In the Yevlakh territorial district, which is probably not atypical, electors ultimately endorsed candidates that they considered to lack the necessary qualifications for deputy, including knowledge of the Russian language.[39]

## Toward a Popular Movement

As the republic party moved to reconsolidate power, independent forces were having trouble establishing themselves on the republic political scene. The first concerted effort to establish independent Azerbaijani political associations seems to have emerged during the "agitated November days" of 1988. In an article published on the first page of the republic's literary weekly, Babäk Ädaläti explained that he and other like-minded individuals had come together to form what he variously referred to as a "people's front" or a "people's national front."[40] Ädaläti's primary concern was the expansion of relations with Southern Azerbaijan, that is, the Azerbaijani population of northern Iran. The popular appeal of this theme, one never addressed by Azerbaijani officialdom, would eventually exacerbate tensions in an already destabilized Azerbaijan.[41]

This initial attempt at forming a popular front movement was frustrated before it really even got off the ground. Azerbaijani militants active in the protest rallies at the time traced its failure to government repression.[42] After the imposition of martial law throughout the republic in late November, authorities arrested numerous Azerbaijanis who had played a central role in speaking to the crowds assembled in Baku's Lenin Square and charged them with anti-Soviet agitation and other violations of the law. At the Academy of Sciences and other cultural institutions, intellectuals who had helped incite the crowds were subjected to criticism and even dismissal.[43]

The political environment in Azerbaijan was hardly conducive to the formation of independent political associations. Azerbaijani political life was marked by the continued hegemony of an entrenched party elite that was only beginning to be transformed under the party's relatively new leadership. Party officials condemned the independent activists as "semi-literate, ideologically unprincipled, and irresponsible."[44] Väzirov referred metaphorically to the proliferation of independent publishing in the republic as a case of "ideological AIDS."[45]

Official intransigence was only part of the story. Just as important a factor in the failure of a more effective independent Azerbaijani political movement to emerge was what I would call the "Karabakh syndrome." The relentless insistence of the NKAO Armenians on self-determination repeatedly called for Azerbaijani reactions and made it difficult for the Azerbaijani movement to shift the focus of its activity and of popular Azerbaijani attitudes toward more broad-based national emancipation, irrespective of the Karabakh crisis.[46]

In March 1989, some two dozen intellectuals organized an "initiative group" for an Azerbaijani Popular Front (APF). The group's governing council was composed entirely of middle-level intellectuals, including journalists and scientific researchers at the Azerbaijani Academy of Sciences, all of whom were of Azerbaijani nationality. Most of the remaining members of the initiative group had a similar profile, although it included a sprinkling of workers and two Russians—one an engineer and the other an economist. The advisory council of the initiative group included several prominent Azerbaijani writers such as Ismayïl Shïkhlï, Yusif Sämädoghlu, and Sabir Rüstämkhanlï, but with these exceptions, writers were at first notably absent from the ranks of the APF's leadership.[47]

The Azerbaijani Popular Front was not an umbrella group for previously existing organizations but rather was composed mainly of individuals. This is an important distinction, since the APF's formation did not reflect an attempt to build a coalition between organizations that had already worked out their own respective programs and concerns regarding political, economic, cultural, or environmental issues. Rather, as an association attempting to accommodate varying interests and political orientations of diverse individuals, the APF contained within its own internal organizational structure the possibility of sharp political divisions and eventual fragmentation.

A central political aim of the Azerbaijani Popular Front was, predictably, rejection of Armenian claims to

[39] *Kommunist*, Feb. 9, 1989.

[40] *Ädäbiyyat vä Injäsänät*, Nov. 25, 1988.

[41] For more discussion of demands with regard to Southern Azerbaijan, see my "Beyond the Nation-State. . . ," loc. cit.

[42] Unpublished interviews given to the Azerbaijani service of Radio Liberty.

[43] *Bakinskiy Rabochiy*, Dec. 9, 1988.

[44] Ibid., Dec. 16, 1988.

[45] *Pravda* (Moscow), Apr. 27, 1989.

[46] In this regard, the Armenian national movement in Armenia also originally emerged in response to the Karabakh movement, although the dynamics of relations between the NKAO and Armenia were of an entirely different order.

[47] For a full description of members of the initiative group, see *Azärbayjan Khalq Jäbhäsi Täshäbbüs Märkäzinin Bülletini* (Baku), No. 1, 1989, pp. 8–9.



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self-determination in the NKAO and maintenance of the territorial integrity of the Azerbaijani republic. The APF also envisioned a broad program with respect to political, economic, cultural, and environmental issues in Azerbaijan. In contrast to the popular fronts in the Baltic republics, the APF did not assert near- or long-term claims for the separation of Azerbaijan from the Soviet polity; instead, it focused on enhanced political and economic sovereignty for the Azerbaijani republic within the context of the Soviet federal state.[48]

The notion of sovereignty, a pivotal concept in the program put forward by the APF, comprised two distinct aims, one with external, the other with internal dimensions. With respect to the federal structure of the Soviet Union, APF activists called for greater devolution of decision-making authority and autonomy to the Azerbaijani republic in its dealings with both the center and the other union republics. Within Azerbaijan itself, the APF program demanded the establishment of sovereign Azerbaijani control over the republic's political, socio-economic, and cultural life, as well as over the natural resources of the republic. One of the key points of the APF's program was the extension of Azerbaijani sovereignty to the entire territory of the republic, including the NKAO and the Nakhchïvan ASSR.

The APF's vision of sovereignty necessarily called for an end to the violation of the republic's rights by external forces—namely, Moscow and the Armenian republic—as well as by internal forces—that is, the Armenians of the NKAO. In this regard, APF activists condemned the activities of the NKAO's special government commission headed by Arkadiy Vol'skiy as a case of Moscow's interference in the domestic affairs of the republic. Similarly to the Azerbaijani party leadership and protesters at public rallies, the Azerbaijani Front condemned what it viewed as repeated Armenian violations of Azerbaijani sovereignty, whether the sources of such activities emanated from the Armenian republic or from Armenian militants within the NKAO itself. Thus, the APF's appeal for the republic's economic sovereignty implied at once greater autonomy for Azerbaijan in its foreign economic relations—whether within or beyond the USSR's borders—and the reintegration of enterprises in the NKAO back into the Azerbaijani economy.

Despite the APF's relatively moderate program of reform in the republic, it was repeatedly shunned by the republic's political establishment. Official arguments on behalf of democratization of the republic's political life were often coupled with condemnations of "meeting dictatorship," a reference to the fact that the independent organizations in Azerbaijan often developed out of participation in rallies held in the republic's public squares.[49] After the formation of the APF initiative group, Azerbaijani activists applied to the Supreme Soviet of the Azerbaijan SSR for legalization. But in conformity with the conservative principles of the Väzirov leadership, the Azerbaijani legislature did not even debate the issue.

In April 1989, top Azerbaijani party officials, including Väzirov, had several unpublicized meetings with representatives of the APF to discuss prospects for the organization's legalization. These early attempts at negotiation failed. The party condemned the APF's alleged aspirations to challenge party hegemony in the republic and for the time being refused to have further contacts with the group.

During August and September, the APF organized increasingly large rallies and strikes. Väzirov condemned these actions, arguing that they would only distract from the solution of the republic's "real" problems and weaken the struggle for Azerbaijani sovereignty.[50] As unrest in the republic grew, the party First Secretary eventually began to speak as if he was willing to negotiate with popular forces, but he refused to name as his negotiating partner the Azerbaijani Popular Front.[51] The party apparently hoped that the APF would somehow simply disappear from the Azerbaijani political scene if it were not officially recognized. (The authorities dealt more harshly with smaller independent associations, such as *Birlik* [Unity], a group seeking a union of Soviet and Iranian Azerbaijan. Police forcibly dispersed a *Birlik* rally in early July and arrested leaders of the organization.)[52]

In the months following the formation of the initiative group, the APF had remained largely an isolated group of intellectuals that failed to win either the active participation of the Baku-based Azerbaijani intellectual elite or effective support from Azerbaijani society at large. This pattern persisted even after the Front's official founding congress, held in Baku in mid-July 1989. The prominent Azerbaijani poet Bäkhtiyar Vahabzadä argued that "other republics have popular fronts, why shouldn't we have one?"[53] But structural impediments blocking the growth of the popular front in Azerbaijan were stronger than convictions in Azerbaijan support-

[48]For an early statement of APF intentions, see "Programme of the People's Front of Azerbaijan," *Central Asian and Caucusus Chronicle* (London), August 1989, pp. 7–10.

[49]*Kommunist*, Feb. 18, 1989.

[50]Ibid, Aug. 31, 1989.

[51]Ibid., Sept. 6, 1989.

[52]Radio Free Europe-Radio Liberty, *Report on the USSR* (Munich), July 21, 1989, p. 50.

[53]Unpublished interview with the Azerbaijani service of Radio Liberty.



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*Thousands of people cram Baku's central square on September 6, 1989, on the fourth day of a massive strike protesting the March 1989 elections and the failure of the Azerbaijan government to reassert its authority over the predominantly Armenian province of Nagorno-Karabakh.*

**—AP/Wide World Photos.**

ing such an organization. In general, Azerbaijani society proved itself to be essentially conservative and failed to share the APF's dedication to the Gorbachevian ideals of political and economic reform or to lend active support to the movement. Instead, both outside and within the Front, popular participation in Azerbaijani politics remained predicated on anti-Armenian sentiments and an intense interest in the Karabakh crisis.

The relatively conservative spirit of Azerbaijaini society was compounded by the influx during the fall of 1988 of nearly 200,000 Azerbaijani refugees displaced from the Armenian countryside, plus numerous refugees from the NKAO itself. The refugees, who flooded into Azerbaijan's urban and rural districts, had been traumatized by the combination of psychological terror and periodic violence against them and entered a society already strained by high unemployment, an endemic housing shortage, and a relatively poor distribution of social services, not to mention the political crisis over the NKAO.[54] In this setting, the refugees often emerged as the most active elements in Azerbaijani society and also the ones most permeated with anti-Armenianism. APF activists could not expect appeals for political and economic reform to resonate strongly with the Azerbaijani population, and faced the unhappy prospect that only an anti-Armenian, NKAO-oriented platform could bring thousands of Azerbaijani supporters into the streets.

In the APF's internal struggle between efforts to expand the agenda seeking the democratization of Azerbaijan and the temptation to cater to the acutely anti-Armenian orientation of the Azerbaijani populace, the Karabakh syndrome proved the more powerful force. Even Azerbaijan's intellectual mainstream remained aloof and suspicious of the APF and its increasingly radical political strategies, preferring to play a cautious game by shunning the Front and focusing on

[54]The Azerbaijani press was filled with discussions of the refugee crisis and attempts to resolve it. See, for example, *Kommunist*, Apr. 29 and Dec. 15, 1989.



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Karabakh as the republic's primary problem. Thus, in late August, several hundred Azerbaijani intellectuals organized, with official consent, a Committee for Aid to Karabakh that could serve as an alternative to the Front and channel popular discontent toward the narrow goal of securing Azerbaijani rights over the NKAO.[55]

By that time, the political struggle between Azerbaijan and the NKAO had intensified. The series of attacks and counter-attacks that had become common in and around the NKAO were on the rise. And the Armenians of the NKAO, convinced that the Vol'skiy commission was implementing pro-Azerbaijani policies in the region, organized unauthorized elections to a National Council to replace the special government commission.[56] Prevented from establishing direct union with Armenia, the National Council fashioned itself as the only legitimate authority in the oblast and issued a proclamation of independence to add an aura of legality to what had long since become a political fact.

Paradoxically, the Azerbaijanis viewed the Vol'skiy commission with equal suspicion, but condemned it for facilitating the NKAO's union with Armenia and subverting Azerbaijani sovereignty over the region. The establishment of an independent Armenian National Council in the NKAO only exacerbated Azerbaijani resistance to the Armenian movement and catalyzed Azerbaijani popular opposition to Azerbaijan republic authorities, who appeared more and more incapable of restoring Azerbaijani control over the NKAO.[57]

*An Azerbaijani family in January 1989 flees to the safety of a Soviet frontier guard post on the Soviet-Turkish border from their home in the Soviet republic of Armenia.*

**—TASS from Sovfoto.**

In this context, the APF initiated appeals for a series of industrial strikes in the republic in order both to force the government to recognize the APF as a legitimate political force representing Azerbaijani public opinion and to obtain the reestablishment of direct Azerbaijani rule throughout the republic's territory, including the elimination of the Vol'skiy commission in the NKAO. Beyond these central concerns, the APF also demanded the nullification of the March elections, the lifting of the curfew imposed in response to the November 1988 demonstrations, and the release of imprisoned political activists.[58]

Despite the powerful momentum created by the strike movement, Azerbaijani political authorities continued to shun the Front and its program for a resolution of the Karabakh crisis. In response, APF activists intensified their struggle by calling for a railway strike to prevent the transport of supplies to both the NKAO and the Armenian republic. Although it was termed "economic terrorism" in the Armenian press and was more widely viewed as a "blockade," Azerbaijani activists defended the campaign as a case of "economic sanctions" or "reactive economic measures" against violations of Azerbaijan's national-territorial sovereignty.[59] APF representatives also viewed the railway strike as an important tactic in forcing party authorities in Azerbaijan to legalize the Front and accede to a series of other APF demands. According to APF Executive Board member Äbulfäz Äliyev, the Front did not exclude the possibility of organizing a general rebellion.[60]

## The APF and the Institutionalization of Azerbaijani Chauvinism

Faced with unabating strikes and rallies at home and with threats from Moscow over its failure to terminate the

[55]Azerbaijani intellectuals first made an appeal for an aid committee in mid-August and held a founding congress at the end of the same month. Ibid., Aug. 17 and 31, 1989.

[56]*Khorhrdayin Hayastan*, Aug. 20, 1989.

[57]Despite its condemnation of the National Council as "unconstitutional" (see *Bakinskiy Rabochiy*, Aug. 27, 1989), the Azerbaijani government was unable to take any practical steps to curtail the council's activities.

[58]For Moscow accounts of strike demands, see *Pravda*, Sept. 10, 1989; and *Izvestiya* (Moscow), Sept. 11, 1989.

[59]*Bakinskiy Rabochiy*, Oct. 5, 1989.

[60]Expressed in an interview published with some delay in *Tercüman* (Istanbul), Nov. 23, 1989, newspaper.



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transportation blockade, the Communist Party of Azerbaijan granted a series of concessions to the APF, including an extraordinary session of the republic's Supreme Soviet in mid-September at which Front representatives were permitted to speak. Fulfilling demands of APF activists, the republic legislature voted to abolish the Vol'skiy commission and to begin drafting laws on Azerbaijan's political and economic sovereignty.

In spite of the permission granted to the Front to participate in the Supreme Soviet session and the incorporation of points from the APF political platform into state policy, the legal and political status of the Azerbaijani Popular Front itself remained uncertain. According to an APF representative, party chief Väzirov at one point in the legislative debate threatened to have Front representatives arrested.[61] With strikes continuing throughout the republic into October, representatives of the APF and the Communist Party held tense, lengthy negotiations that finally brought legalization of the Front. Although the party leadership acceded to the legalization, it remained deeply hostile to the Front activists. Whereas the legalization of independent political associations in Armenia and the Baltic republics to a great degree marked a watershed in the party's toleration of organizational rivals, in Azerbaijan, talks over the recognition of the Front were conducted in an atmosphere of crisis and threats of continued strikes.

***The law on sovereignty.*** Apart from the initiation of public discussions of a draft law on the republic's economic independence, one other achievement that followed in the wake of the legislature's special session was the drafting of a law on sovereignty . This law was promulgated in its final form in late September and published in the press in early October.[62] It established the legal basis for rejecting federal laws that contradict republic laws, but the law was in essence a moderate one, since the Azerbaijan SSR was proclaimed a "sovereign socialist state" within the Soviet federation and not a state independent of the Soviet polity.

The Azerbaijani law on sovereignty is noteworthy for the ways in which it applies the concept of sovereignty within the republic, especially considering the extent to which debates over the law revolved around the Karabakh crisis.[63] Proclaimed as a law of the Azerbaijan SSR's sovereignty, the law was in fact a proclamation of the Azerbaijani *nation*'s sovereignty over the republic. The law's preamble refers to the Soviet Union not as a federation of independent national republics but as a "socialist federation of Soviet nations." The Azerbaijani language was reconfirmed as the state language,[64] and the republic's land and natural resources were defined as "national wealth" belonging to "the Azerbaijani people." According to the law, Azerbaijani sovereignty extends throughout the republic, including the NKAO and the Nakhchïvan ASSR. The borders of the republic are not to be changed without approval by a popular referendum, that is, without the approval of the Azerbaijani nation.

In connection with the reassertion of legal authority over the NKAO, the law notes that the republic retains the independent right to resolve all internal problems, and it includes articles by virtue of which the republic government can proclaim martial law in any district of the republic and establish or eliminate autonomous districts within its sovereign jurisdiction. This aspect of the law was in part a response to APF demands that the Karabakh crisis be recognized as an internal Azerbaijani problem that could not be decided in Moscow, Yerevan, or Stepanakert, but only in Baku.[65] Thus, the law established the legal framework for a potential "resolution" of the Karabakh crisis by the imposition of martial law under Azerbaijani auspices in the region or the simple abolition of the institutional-administrative basis of Karabakh Armenian claims to self-determination and separation from the Azerbaijani republic.

## The End of Azerbaijani Reform

Official recognition of the APF's status as a representative of the Azerbaijani people had the perverse effect of exposing the Front's relatively weak authority over the popular movement in Azerbaijan. With only tenuous support from the Baku intelligentsia and relatively little control over the popular movement on whose shoulders it had risen to prominence, Front activists were unable to keep their part of the bargain with the party and convince strikers to put an end to the economic sanctions against Armenia and the NKAO that they had spearheaded.[66]

The continuing Azerbaijani railway blockade of the

[61] *Moscow News*, Oct. 1, 1989.

[62] *Kommunist*, Oct. 5, 1989.

[63] Elizabeth Fuller, "Moscow Rejects Azerbaijani Law on Sovereignty: A Moral Victory for Armenia?" *Report on the USSR*, Dec. 1, 1989, pp. 16–18.

[64] *Kommunist*, Oct. 5, 1989. Along with those of Armenia and Georgia, Azerbaijan's constitution had, well before the Gorbachev reforms, included a clause that regarded the national language as the state language.

[65] Ibid. Oct. 4, 1989.

[66] Earlier attempts by the APF to call a temporary moratorium had also failed. See *Pravda*, Aug. 24, 1989. Reports on the continuation of the blockade were published regularly by the Armenian and international press throughout autumn 1989. See, for example, *The New York Times*, Dec. 3, 1989.



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*In the foreground, residents of Soviet Azerbaijan's Nakhchïvan Autonomous Oblast shout to friends and relatives across the Arax River in Iranian Azerbaijan on January 8, 1989; the crowds destroyed a number of border installations in protest against difficulties in leaving the USSR to visit Iran.*

**—Reuters/Bettmann.**

NKAO and Armenia served only to heighten the determination of Armenian nationalists in the NKAO and in Armenia to take control of the oblast. The increasingly intransigent positions of both Armenians and Azerbaijanis led to expanded armed conflict between the two rival populations in the NKAO. During the fall of 1989, raids and counter-raids that had become commonplace in and around the NKAO multiplied and spread to the Armenian-Azerbaijani and Armenian-Nakhchïvan border regions. Although Soviet spokespeople were hesitant to accept inquisitive Western correspondents' characterization of the conflict as "civil war," the southern Caucasus was indeed in a full-scale state of war.[67]

Faced with increasingly strident violence, Moscow again intervened with irresolute political measures. At the end of November, central authorities decided to abolish the Vol'skiy commission, which had proven incapable of resolving the local tensions. By reestablishing Azerbaijani rule over the NKAO, Moscow thus returned the region to a virtual status quo ante. A new, republic-level oversight committee, appointed by the Presidium of the Azerbaijani Supreme Soviet and staffed primarily by ethnic Azerbaijani officials, was to take over the day-to-day management of the NKAO until local party and state organizations could be resuscitated.[68] To compound its mistake, Moscow reassigned authority for security functions in the NKAO to agencies of the Azerbaijan republic, clearly a dangerous step considering the continuing Armenian-Azerbaijani hostilities.

In Azerbaijan, especially among party officials, Moscow's decision was embraced as a step toward restoring Azerbaijani sovereignty in the NKAO, although in practice the oblast remained beyond the control of Azerbaijani authorities. The Armenian response was proclaimed in Yerevan in a matter of days, when in a

[67]As late as mid-January 1990, USSR Foreign Ministry spokesperson Gennadiy Gerasimov was only willing to refer to the Armenian-Azerbaijani battles as "almost a civil war." *International Herald Tribune* (Paris), Jan. 17, 1990.

[68]The precise composition of NKAO representation was left temporarily unresolved. *Kommunist*, Jan. 7, 1990.



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*The wreckage of the belongings of Armenians litters Lenin Avenue in the Azerbaijan capital city, Baku, after January 1990 rioting by Azerbaijani crowds.*

**—TASS from Sovfoto.**

joint legislative session, the NKAO's National Council and the Armenian Supreme Soviet declared the unification of the two territories under a single Armenian government.[69] In the NKAO itself, Armenian authorities refused to deal with the newly organized oversight committee and sought further expansion of political, economic, and cultural relations with the Armenian republic.

With the failure of political solutions to the crisis, war raged on between Armenians and Azerbaijanis in the border areas. And the Azerbaijani Popular Front, despite its enhanced position in society, remained excluded from meaningful participation in policy-making in Baku. In this situation, the Popular Front's internal divisions verged on fragmentation. Using the popular front's name, Azerbaijani militants attacked party and Ministry of Internal Affairs offices in the southern districts of Jälilabad and Länkäran in December. By the new year, organized groups of Azerbaijani militants with no apparent ties to the Baku-based APF attacked posts along the Soviet-Iranian border in Nakhchïvan to force an opening to Southern Azerbaijan. Protesters reiterated long-standing demands for the expansion of direct relations with the large Azerbaijani population in Iran, as well as the right of Azerbaijani refugees from Armenia to settle on lands in the wide, uncultivated Soviet-Iranian border zone.[70] Representatives of the APF sought meetings with the republic authorities and the protesters in a vain attempt to restore order, but unrest continued for weeks.

Finally, in mid-January 1990, angry Azerbaijani protesters in the city of Baku turned on the remnants of the city's Armenian civilian population for a final round of murder, pillage, and deportation. Hardly active participants in the militant nationalist movements forged in the NKAO, the Baku Armenians were nonetheless an easily accessible target for the expression of Azerbaijani frustrations. For almost a week, groups of Azerbaijanis preyed upon the often elderly, defenseless Armenian residents of a city that traditionally prided itself on internationalism and multi-ethnic tolerance.

In the context of armed war in the NKAO, unrest along the Azerbaijani-Iranian borders, and the re-eruption of anti-Armenian violence in the capital, the endemic political paralysis of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan was quickly transformed into acute political collapse. Party appeals for calm and an end to violence in Baku that appeared in newspapers and were broadcast by the republic's mass media fell on deaf ears among a population that had lost all confidence in the party apparatus. Within the Azerbaijani party itself, officials as high as Bureau member Häsän Häsänov publicly condemned the party's paralysis and political mistakes.[71]

The mounting political crisis and social chaos eventually brought Moscow's declaration of martial law, first in the NKAO and then in Baku, and the massive introduction of Soviet troops in the republic. It is probably too early to piece together the chain of rapidly unfolding events in December and January and the elements of decision-making that led to the intervention of Soviet

[69]For the text of the decision, see *Khorhrdayin Hayastan*, Dec. 3, 1989.

[70]*Kommunist*, Jan. 10, 1990. On the history of Azerbaijani interests in Southern Azerbaijan/Northern Iran, see my "Beyond the Nation-State. . . ," loc. cit.; and David B. Nissman, *The Soviet Union and Iranian Azerbaijan: The Uses of Nationalism for Political Penetration*, Boulder, CO, Westview, 1987.

[71]*Cumhuriyet* (Istanbul), Jan. 15, 1990.



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*An Azerbaijani nationalist burns his Communist party membership card at a January 1990 rally in Khanlar to protest the arrival of Soviet troops to suppress demonstrations in the republic.*

**—TASS from Sovfoto.**

troops in Azerbaijan over January 19–20, 1990.[72] Irrespective of any purported intent, in practice, Soviet authorities delayed the introduction of troops until the remains of Baku's Armenian population had been killed or expelled. Only then did the central government exercise its prerogative to restore order in Azerbaijan through the often brutal repression of Azerbaijani popular forces, apparently discriminating little between those who were violent and those who were not. First Secretary Väzirov was ousted on January 20, and was replaced four days later by the chairman of the republic's Council of Ministers, Ayaz Niyaz oghlu Mütällibov, a research engineer.[73]

It is perhaps both fitting and ironic that simultaneous with the destruction of Baku's Armenian community, attempts at reform in Azerbaijan were also dealt a fatal blow. The conservative moves toward political reform under Väzirov, promoted as they were in conditions of unabated crisis over the NKAO, contributed to the total disintegration of the party's social authority and organizational integrity. Moreover, the attempts at democratic coalition-building under the auspices of the APF, radicalized by its long exclusion from politics and the increasing power of Azerbaijani chauvinism, collapsed under the weight both of Soviet tanks and the Front's own internal fragmentation and disarray.

The intervention of the Soviet military in Azerbaijan provided the Communist Party of Azerbaijan an opportunity to rebuild itself internally and reestablish itself more firmly in the republic's political life. By the late spring of 1990, the party apparatus, buttressed by the continued presence of the military, allowed the reemergence of independent political associations, including the Azerbaijani Popular Front.[74] Nonetheless, party chief Mütällibov, who had himself elected president of the Azerbaijan Supreme Soviet, has remained intent on controlling the republic's political process, even if displaying greater concern for the defense of Azerbaijani national interests. Under Mütällibov, harassment of political activists has continued, and the APF newspaper has been shut down on occasion for "slander" against the Azerbaijani president.[75] Elections to the republic's Supreme Soviet hastily scheduled for autumn 1990 have already been postponed once; the results will most likely differ only slightly from those of the Communist-dominated elections of March 1988.

Political change in Azerbaijan emerged with its own particular trajectory, but many of these developments reflect the more general conflicts inherent in any process of radical political transformation in multi-ethnic society. In particular, the contradictory imperatives of the Armenian and Azerbaijani national movements in Azerbaijan reflect a more general set of structural conflicts between minority and majority nationalisms that exist in all the Soviet republics with multi-ethnic populations. As the multinational Soviet federation moves into the 1990's, Azerbaijan stands as a reminder of the dangerous potential of ethnic conflict and political change under Gorbachev's *perestroyka*.

[72]In particular, the notion—picked up by Western correspondents—of a conspiracy to dislodge the APF by promoting the Front's radicalization and anti-Armenian violence must be considered with caution. See, e.g., *The New York Times*, Feb. 19, 1990.

[73]See Elizabeth Fuller, "Azerbaijani Central Committee Elects New First Secretary," *Report on the USSR*, Feb 2, 1990, p. 16. According to this report, the republic Supreme Soviet had earlier in January demanded the removal of Väzirov.

[74]Ibid., May 25, 1990, p. 23.

[75]On the closing of the APF newspaper *Azadlyg*, see *Kommunist*, July 20, 1990. For other cases of harassment of the APF, see *Bakinskiy Rabochiy*, May 19, 1990; and *FBIS-SOV*, July 20, 1990, p. 103, and July 27, 1990, p. 88.



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# Deng versus the Peasantry: Recollectivization in the Countryside

**Edward Friedman**

In Marxist political analysis, the peasantry's contribution to democracy is, at best, often underestimated. Typically the historical contribution of traditional rural tillers to democracy in numerous and diverse societies, from Sri Lanka and India, to England and Sweden, post–World War II Japan, and Taiwan is overlooked. In China, in particular, the peasantry is commonly assumed by both Chinese democrats and foreign analysts to be dependent and less than rational, incapable of espousing democracy. Likewise, a popular view of the post-Mao Chinese countryside is that the success of Deng Xiaoping's policy of decollectivization and marketization has made peasants into opponents of the disgruntled, democratically-oriented urban population. "Even some dissidents think that the Communist party could probably count on its organizational network to turn out the peasantry and win a reasonably free election."[1]

The view that the peasantry is satisfied and supportive of the Communist party ignores the continued power of the command economy, whose bloated urban ministries and anti-rural scissors prices have been, since 1985, undermining the agricultural price gains of the original post-Mao price reforms; it ignores the corrupt party-state *nomenklatura* that is plundering the rural beneficiaries of the extraordinarily productive early post-Mao reforms; and it ignores the most recent attempts of party conservatives to woo urban workers at the expense of the peasants. Contrary to popular belief, support for the Deng regime rests not on the supposedly contented peasantry but on a coalition of conservative and corrupt bureaucrats and conservative and frightened workers in state enterprises who are anxious over the effects of reform on themselves.[2] In fact, the Leninist party and its policies have alienated the peasants from China's rulers.

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## Misperceived Peasant Attitudes

The misreading of China's peasantry can in large part be traced to the urban and educated Han Chinese. They harbor extraordinary resentments against the life-wasting policies of Mao, which forced them to live and learn communism among socially conservative, patriarchal, and parochial villagers who neither understood nor cared about Marx, Lenin, or communism. Urban dwellers returned from the countryside convinced that China's backward peasants were a long way from supporting democracy. As one put it: "Before I went to college, I had spent eight years toiling in rural communes. I realized very well that social conditions here in China are far from ripe for the stage of democratization."[3]

[1]Nicholas Kristof, "Ominous Embers From the Fires of 1989," *The New York Times,* Apr. 15, 1990, p. 8.

[2]According to V. Zotov, "The working class has the most conservative role to play." See "Political Crisis in China," *Far Eastern Affairs* (Moscow), No. 2, 1990, p. 70.

[3]Willy Wo-lap Lam, *The Era of Zhao Ziyang,* Hong Kong, A. B. Books and Stationery Ltd., 1989, p. 61. In like manner, a democratic scholar in Hong Kong gave a simple reason why China could not democratize as had Eastern Europe: "China has vast numbers of peasants and illiterate people." See *Cheng Ming* (Hong Kong), Feb. 1, 1990, pp. 59–63, translated in Joint Publications Research Service, *China* (Washington, DC—hereafter, *JPRS-CAR*), Mar. 30, 1990, p. 15. Or, as Wang Gungwu put it, Mao turned the revolution "into a peasant-based and backward Chinese uprising." See "Outside the Chinese Revolution," *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* (Canberra), January 1990, p. 41. Even histories of Chinese peasant rebellions published in the immediate post-Mao era found peasants narrow, patriarchal, conservative, superstitious, and backward, in sum, lacking the basis for modern, scientific, technical, and productive progress. See Kwang-ching Liu, "World View and Peasant Rebellion: Reflections on Post-Mao Historiography," *Journal of Asian Studies* (Ann Arbor, MI), February 1981, pp. 295–326.



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The anti-peasant attitude of educated urbanites smacks of racism. For example, they themselves usually hate the harsh life of military service, but maintain that peasants do not mind the army, describing peasants as dumb beasts willing to serve cruel authority. The fact that Mao, who is blamed for wasting so many lives and a generation of time, is seen as a peasant contributes to their anti-peasant attitudes. The errors of Maoism are understood by the urban educated as the errors of romanticizing and bestowing privileges upon a reactionary peasantry.[4] Their view is reflected in the stark contrast drawn between peasant reality in the hinterland and the Maoist idealization of peasant life in the extraordinary film, *Yellow Earth*. This post-Mao film outraged Deng's reactionary military allies. The film portrays a primitive peasantry for all practical purposes beyond the reach of Mao's ignorant utopianism. In the same vein, Nien Cheng, author of *Life and Death in Shanghai,* has described China's conservatives as ignorant peasants: "Most of the Old Guard were peasants with no education."[5]

The Deng regime has chosen to present itself as pro-peasant and seeks to woo the peasantry, viewed as a simple, incorruptible, and tough group, by identifying with the peasantry's cultural particularism. Anti-reformists in the regime associate themselves with Mao the peasant, who also despised what was soft and foreign. They accept the hated enemies of the purportedly rough, rooted peasantry, such as Jiang Qing, as their own enemies and are fond of quoting Mao's response to Jiang when she ridiculed his rejection of high-class cuisine. "Just a hick, I can't get rid of peasant habits! She said it. I am a hick. She's a sophisticate."[6]

The focus of this article is not the contrasting perceptions of the peasantry held by China's urban educated (and iterated by foreign journalists), and by China's nativistic conservatives. Rather, this article analyzes how presuppositions about the peasantry obscure the intensifying contradictions between the Deng Xiaoping regime and an increasingly alienated and angry, but also complex and divided, peasantry. Although the peasantry is sometimes parochial and chauvinistic, it is also economically rational and a potential supporter of democracy. Those trying to conserve the traditional socialist system hope they can succeed by appealing to the parochial and chauvinistic streaks in the peasantry. At the same time, democrats seeking to reform the system overlook the peasantry's progressive potential, thus slighting forces that could be marshaled against the present system.

The Maoist-Stalinist proclivities of conservatives preclude their appealing to the expansive economic interests of villagers. Conservative rulers abjure market and price incentives and prefer state control and rationed distribution; they will not import cheap grain and export higher value canned fruits. Instead, authorities in Beijing mandate domestic grain production and force grain sales on tillers at prices that are so low that grain growers are unable to maintain a decent standard of living.[7]

Peasants blame the local party officials for their present plight.[8] The venality of grass-roots officials is widespread. "In one poverty-stricken village in the mountainous Anhui Province, cadres forced peasants to contribute one-tenth of their annual income for 'entertainment fees' . . . village cadres also used 80 percent of the spring plowing funds for dining, although half the peasants in the village had to borrow grain to survive."[9] Another observer commented: "Peasants have seen *apparatchiki* transformed into local satraps, who use their strategic position between state and society to wheel and deal for personal monetary advantage."[10]

As a rule, Chinese peasants do not credit the material progress they have made in recent years to the policies of the central government. The Deng regime's view that the peasants ought to be grateful for post-Mao material gains and be silent about all else is risible. Not only does traditional culture socialize villagers to mistrust ur-

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[4]Han Minzhu (pseud.), *Cries For Democracy,* Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1990, p. 285.

[5]"Introduction," *Massacre in Beijing*, New York, Warner Books, 1989, p. 4.

[6]*Lingdao kexue* (Zhengzhou), Dec. 12, 1989, pp. 3–5, trans. in *JPRS-CAR,* Mar. 23, 1990, pp. 25–27. Similarly, when a top doctor tried to get Mao to eat nutritious food, Mao responded, "I am the son of a peasant. Ever since I was little, I have lived the peasant life. I am used to it. Don't try to change me. Don't try!" As with the school of village prose writers in Russia, a roots school has developed in China that embraces a traditional notion of the patriarchal peasantry. In contrast to urbanites and youth, villagers and the elderly help each other. In villages, there are no strangers. Since village life is ancient and real, people who flee to the city to make money or wear the clothes of urbanites are mocked as false. The virtues that have kept China alive are held to be peasant virtues—patriotism, hard work, and not insisting on high material rewards. (See the translations of the works of Han Shaogan, Jia Pingwa, and Li Zhun in Helen Siu, Ed., *Furrows: Peasants, Intellectuals, and the State,* Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, 1990.) In the view of the roots school, China's survival requires returning to these roots. The roots school strikes me as laden with a nativist fundamentalism that can support a chauvinistic, Maoist collectivism in opposition to individualism, openness to the world, and democracy.

[7]These rulers rail at China's successful producers of economic crops: "If the present situation goes on, we'll have nothing to eat but fruit and fish." See Lam, op. cit., p. 266.

[8]For details on the heavy burden on rural producers, see *Tansuo* (Taipei), January 1990, pp. 77–78, trans. in *Inside China Mainland,* March 1990, pp 14–15.

[9]*The Christian Science Monitor* (Boston, MA), Jan. 4, 1990, citing China's *Jingji ribao* (Beijing).

[10]Jonathan Unger, "State and Peasant in Post-Revolution China," *The Journal of Peasant Studies* (London), October 1989, p. 135.



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*A Chinese peasant.*

**Allen Russell/ProFiles West.**

ban dwellers, especially talkers who claim to be the sources of village bounty, but the hard-working peasant poor remember the Mao era, when the policies of the central government locked them into collectives; subjected them to the Stalinist system of household registration, as well as to state control over travel, job transfers, and moving one's residence; and paid them low farmgate prices to ensure cheap food for cities, the state administration, and the military.

The usual view that a Stalinist system siphons off resources from the peasantry to fund urban industrialization must be amended in the case of Mao-era China because the Stalinist system, as applied in the Chinese countryside produced such disincentives and wasted so much of what was produced that the government had to spend a great deal of money to maintain the means necessary for securing agricultural commodities. Maoism—understood by scholars such as Li Rui and Su Shaozhi as a deepening of Stalinism—intensified these contradictions and left peasants with nothing,[11] thereby widening the material gap and social antagonism between city and countryside.

When reforms began in the countryside in 1979, they were limited to contracting out the responsibility for farming to households in one poor area.[12] In Anhui province, First Secretary Wan Li "allowed the peasants to dispose of their own surpluses [on the market] after the tax on grain was paid, in spite of the campaign against the 'restoration of capitalism,' which was moving in on him from the surrounding provinces."[13] However, despite the immediate success of this policy, traditional socialist forces were sufficiently strong so that in September 1980 the leadership still "withheld judgment on the rural responsibility system and the role of the market while allowing reform experiments to continue."[14] "In the eyes of the capital, realizing the agricultural responsibility system at the family level seemed

[11]Liu Binyan put it as follows: "I lost everything . . . . I was deprived of all rights. I became a peasant." Quoted in Orville Schell, *Discos and Democracy,* New York, Anchor, 1988, p. 146.

[12]Lam, op. cit., p. 136. According to Wang Yuzhao, the center even distributed documents "forbidding the promotion of contracting to households." See *Da baogan yu da qushi,* Beijing, Guangming Ribao Publishing House,1987, p. 11.

[13]Liu Binyan, *A Higher Kind of Loyalty,* New York, Random House, 1980, p. 219. The experiment was attacked for taking the revisionist Yugoslav path of "going it alone." See *Da baogan yu da qushi,* p. 13.

[14]Carol Lee Hamrin, *China and the Challenge of the Future,* Boulder, CO, Westview, 1990, p. 38.



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*In Zhejiang, a farmer tends his field near multi-storey houses that reflect the new wealth resulting from China's economic reforms.*

**Reuters/Bettmann.**

unachievable."[15] "The early reform in agriculture. . . circumvented the whole bureaucratic process . . . . No systematic document . . . was drafted or approved . . . until 1982."[16] Most outside analysts, noting that decollectivization increased production, wrongly concluded that ruling groups were strongly promoting the marketizing reform. In fact, the interests of entrenched Leninist groups led to such profound resistance to economic rationality in rural areas that disgruntled peasants had only a small opening.

Nevertheless, starting in 1979, the poorest villagers poured out through that little opening. They fled the collectives, and attempted to take control of their own destiny. They were dubbed *zi-liu-ren,* freed people, free of the feudal collective. Unfortunately, government policies never caught up with these villagers, who knew how to turn an unproductive collective into productive wealth. At every step, villagers were limited by continuing state-imposed constraints and by the fear that the reforms that had been initiated would be countermanded. Continuing conservative, bureaucratic resistance made them anxious, even panicky, about the reimposition of old restraints. As a result, they often acted on short-term calculations that produced quick profits but damaged the soil, irrigation systems, and the ecology.[17] In 1983, local party response to this panic permitted long-term land leases, which, in turn, led to a 1984 Central Committee decision to allow land contracts for 20 years.[18] But even this concession to the peasantry did not institutionalize the rural reforms, and a year later, the villagers' lack of confidence in the permanence of the reforms proved to be well founded.

## CCP Reverses Rural Policy

Starting in 1985, the Deng regime moved to turn price policies against rural Chinese as the state experi-

[15]Yang Zhong Mei, *Hu Yaobang,* Armonk, NY, M. E. Sharpe, 1988, p. 144.

[16]Zhao Suisheng, "The Feeble Political Capacity of a Strong One-Party Regime—An Institutional Approach Toward the Formulation and Implementation of Economic Policy in Post-Mao Mainland China," Part 2, *Issues and Studies* (Mucha, Taiwan), February 1990, pp. 44–45.

[17]Han Minzhu, op. cit., p. 79. Capturing the peasant sense that today's policies will change tomorrow, William Hinton cites the peasant view of the Deng regime: "You no sooner think of it than you say it, you no sooner say it than you do it, you no sooner do it than it's a mess." See *The Great Reversal,* New York, Monthly Review, 1990, p. 189. The self-destructive panic about reversion to Mao-era policies is so strong that Liu Binyan believes "famine is possible." See Liu Binyan, *Tell the World,* New York, Pantheon, 1989, p. 162.

[18]Yang Zhong Mei, op. cit., p. 146.



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*Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping talks with Chen Yun during the opening session of the Chinese Communist Party's 13th Congress in October 1987.*

**Reuters/Bettmann.**

enced increasing difficulty "paying cash to peasants for contracted deliveries of produce."[19] Confronted by a bumper grain harvest, the state refused to pay the contractual above-quota prices and imposed lower prices for grain. This move undercut grain production because peasants shifted to the production of other, more profitable crops. To combat falling production of grain and other staples, from 1986 on, the state forced the peasants to return to less profitable grain production. In many instances, peasants' profits did not even cover the costs of production.

The alternatives—reducing real urban wages, allowing prices to rise to levels consistent with voluntary supply, shifting state budget funds to pay tillers—remained unpalatable to the rulers.[20] The result has been that, "since 1985, the rising costs of agricultural inputs such as fertilizer, water, and seeds, with little increase in grain prices, have exacerbated the urban-rural gap and led the peasants to produce a marketable surplus of grain only when forced."[21] Deng regime representatives acknowledge that during "1985–90, our country's food production sank into stagnant or low-rate growth."[22]

Another perspective on the reasons behind the reversal of the pro-peasant reforms stresses the systemic obstacles to the completion of the reform process rath-

[19]Jan Prybyla, "Why China's Economic Reforms Fail," *Asian Survey* (Berkeley, CA), November 1989, pp. 1025.

[20]Louis Putterman, *Dualism and Reform in China*, Brown University Working Papers in Comparative Development, No. 12, 1989, pp. 20–22. William Hinton instead finds that in 1985–86, in addition to local barriers against trading out agricultural surpluses, rural flooding caused panic hoarding of grain in North China, thus making "rationing, grain coupons, and state guarantees look good again." See Hinton, op. cit., p. 106.

[21]David Zweig, "Evaluating China's Rural Policies, 1949–1989," *The Fletcher Forum* (Medford, MA), Winter 1990, p. 28.

[22]"Survival and Development of the People's Republic of China," *Zhongguo qingnian bao* (Beijing), Dec. 5, 8, 12, and 23, 1989, trans. in *JPRS-CAR*, Mar. 23, 1990, pp. 4–11. These spokespeople further noted that "In the peasant community, illiterate and semiliterate people now number about 219 million, or one-fourth of the total worldwide," and suggest as a solution to "greatly develop education in the villages . . . and instill consciousness for producing modern goods." The peasant victim is blamed for the ruler's crime.



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er than the particular problems that specific policies created. Soon after the reforms began, "a senior Soviet diplomat in Beijing," focusing on ruling group reliance on the traditional socialist system, "explained privately that . . . he did not believe the system could long tolerate . . . 80 percent of the population working under an individual incentive-based economy in which the most productive are allowed to get rich."[23] In 1985, when a leading conservative, Chen Yun, attacked the rural reforms, it was as part of a general onslaught on the reform process.[24]

Subsequent developments suggest that the political anxieties of rulers lay behind their anti-peasant shift. Concern that "every time prices go up, [urban] people feel restless," swiftly led to a 1987 national "attempt to keep consumer prices stable and to keep popular discontent from spreading beyond the [college] campuses."[25] "Economist Dong Furen . . . said the state's present policy was to keep low prices for hogs, ration pork supplies, and keep the urban wage rate from climbing." American economist Dwight Perkins warned that such policies "would not increase farmers' enthusiasm."[26] In another attempt to keep urban dwellers happy with below-market-priced goods from the countryside, China's rulers banned "free-market trading in cotton, raw silk, and grain . . . . The State . . . closed the cotton free market . . . [and] mobilized the public security department to keep . . . order during the cotton picking season."[27]

Thus, by 1987, villagers were again faced with the threat of forced labor on and off the land, and forced sales at a single low price to a state marketing board.[28] This development and the reversal of many rural reforms led to increased peasant defiance.[29]

Although local authorities in some southern regions continued to experiment "with the clear sale of farm land to peasants during 1987–88,"[30] the conservatives had regained the initiative in Beijing by 1987. They backed anti-reform officials who already "had sought to scrap the 'family responsibility system' and had gone back to the collective road of Chairman Mao."[31] By mid-1988, "panic buying of sugar, eggs, meat" was taking place, and by December, the state had "reimposed rationing of pork, sugar, and eggs" in major cities.[32] Aware of how urban dwellers, angered by rising food prices, had turned against the Leninist system in Poland, conservative power holders in Beijing made the provision of supplies of cheap food to urban dwellers a priority, although this meant not paying tillers a fair price for their products or paying them in "worthless IOU's," a move that amounted "to outright confiscation."[33] The Deng regime was determined to woo urban workers so that they would not form an alliance with democratic intellectuals and create the kind of coalition that threatened the communist dictatorship in Poland.

Clearly, the conservative power holders in Beijing concluded, as Mao himself did in 1962–64, that whatever the material benefit of household farming, it had to be eliminated since it formed the deepest root of capitalism. To achieve this Stalinist end, the regime has readopted some of the economically disastrous policies of Mao. Mao-era symbols such as Lei Feng and Daqing have reappeared, as have Mao medallions and Maoist hagiography. Propaganda once again condemns concern with money and materialism. As in the Mao era, the regime's major worry is "creeping capitalism."

Conservatives also fear the growth of democracy in China, which provides them a second reason for attacking a property-holding peasantry. They view these peasants as seeds that could germinate into democracy.[34] The unfortunate lessons of Marxism-Leninism (still accepted as gospel)—"collectivization of agriculture, exaggeration of the negative features of the peasant as

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[23]Cited in Jay Taylor, *The Dragon and the Goose*, Westport, Greenwood Press, 1987, p. 124. Five years was the limit the system could tolerate.

[24]Chen Te-sheng, "The Interaction Between Economic and Political Reform in Mainland China, 1979–89," *Issues and Studies*, February 1990, p. 20. For a fact-filled description of how the "crisis was a natural outcome . . . of liberalizing . . . while preserving Leninist political and ideological controls," of how forces "endemic to Soviet-style economies" unleash anti-reform tendencies, see Hamrin, op. cit., pp. 159–209. Still, "Chen's sharpest criticism was aimed at the 1985 slowdown in grain production, when price disincentives for grain growing were exacerbated by the abandonment of monopoly procurement and sale by the state" (p. 177). According to Liu Binyan, "[B]eginning in 1985, [Hu Yaobang's] position steadily weakened." See *A Higher Kind of Loyalty*, p. 247. Reflective of the general policy switch, Deng Xiaoping distanced himself from Special Economic Zones, which were compelled to retrench.

[25]John Woodruff, *China In Search of a Future: Years of Great Reform, 1982–87*, Seattle, WA, University of Washington Press, 1989, pp. 198–99.

[26]*China Daily* (Beijing), Dec. 4, 1987.

[27]Ibid., Aug. 17, 1987.

[28]Lam, op. cit., p. 268.

[29]Ibid., p. 86.

[30]Ibid., p. 274.

[31]Ibid., p. 142. Reformers also warned that if that road were taken again, "trees will be felled and pigs killed." See ibid., p. 143.

[32]*Massacre in Beijing*, pp. 131–32.

[33]Prybyla, loc. cit., p. 1029.

[34]This resurgent Maoist analysis was spelled out at the April 1987 Zhouzhou conference and further explicated in January 1990. It was immediately described by Hong Kong analysts as a return to Cultural Revolution Maoism. (See *Jiushi niandai* [Hong Kong] for June and July 1987.) This resurgent Maoism builds on Deng Xiaoping's contention that "liberalization would just shift China's present policies onto the capitalist road." Hong Kong, Taiwan, the United States, and others are found to be trying to induce a peaceful evolution to the bourgeois road. To oppose this, the Deng regime insists that ideology must be Mao Zedong Thought, understood as a struggle against bourgeois liberalization, a prolonged struggle "between two ideologies and two lines." Distinguishing post-Mao Maoism's impact is a change in popular consciousness. The reborn Maoism cannot scare Chinese by warning them that capitalism means poverty. Instead, the alternative to continuing the party dictatorship is described as chaos, disorder, great disturbances, and anarchy. See the material translated in *JPRS-CAR*, Apr. 20, 1990.



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a property owner, and the fanning up of counter-revolution by the peasantry"[35]—have been applied once more. It is the ideology of Mao's Stalinism.

But the peasants of today are not the peasants of the Mao era. Discontented and hurt by the policies of the conservatives, they are no longer motivated by utopian illusions and identification with a charismatic leader. Discontent, however, does not automatically take the form of political opposition. A spark is needed to start the fire.

## Changing Peasant Attitudes

By 1989, many observers in China thought that spark existed. Successful peasants and village entrepreneurs, already hard hit by the reinstitution of some of the economic policies of the Mao era, were in essence being robbed by corrupt local party people who claimed to be collecting taxes. Even the Deng regime acknowledged what was happening: as "a result of overly high estimates of the extent of peasant prosperity . . . some sectors and regions have put out their hands to the peasants. A trend toward a marked increase in peasant burdens has appeared . . . . community administrative organizations can take for their own use all resources within the community at any time as their own needs warrant . . . . the burden that China's peasants carry far exceeds that of other countries."[36]

It is important, however, to keep in mind the plight of local officials and recognize that not all of them were motivated by venality. By 1985, villagers once dubbed class enemies were doing well; production, market and incentive practices, previously labeled reactionary, were called progressive. The higher authorities expected local officials to build roads, take care of irrigation, promote science and technology, build export sectors, and much more. It was impossible. Officials in the countryside lacked the wherewithal. They could not even collect legal taxes. Indeed:

*In recent years, collecting grain in the country has been like fighting a war. Party officials lead the way, followed by the police. The peasants are vigilant. In some places, every time the grain collecting season comes, the village is organized, with someone standing guard. As soon as officials are spotted, the guard will whistle. All the villagers then bolt their doors and escape to the fields.*[37]

Caught between a rock and a hard place, officials threatened and robbed those prospering from reforms and rewarded their loyal allies with the best economic opportunities, thereby revealing how little has changed politically, and how fragile the recent economic gains really are.

The fragility of the political and economic situation in China is most dramatically illustrated by the floating peasant population. At the time of Mao's death, the percentage of the Chinese population tied to the land was uniquely high. Because Mao had bottled them up[38] and because labor was underemployed to an extreme point of economic irrationality, perhaps one-third of the peasantry swiftly fled the land when post-Mao reforms began. Over the past decade, millions of rural poor seized the opportunity for mobility offered by the reforms and fled poverty, seeking employment in peddling, hauling, construction, and temporary urban labor. The criminals, jobless, or failures among these people are often seen as the victims of the massacre of June 1989, yet they are also seen by some within the Deng regime as the fuel that made the flames of insurrection shoot high before they were snuffed out. Both these points of view have some merit. Clearly, the supposedly passive peasantry has been playing an increasingly active role in Chinese politics. In the small, rural towns, thousands of students of peasant background from local colleges and universities marched and chanted, "No democracy—no bread."[39] Spring 1989 democracy demonstrators knew that many of the peasants in the city stood with them and aided them. Observers recount active peasant participation against the military crackdown. "I saw a column of tanks in a village east of Beijing blocked in the early dawn by village women squatting

[35]M. Titarenko, "40 Years of the PRC," *Far Eastern Affairs*, No. 1, 1990, p. 14.

[36]Qi Jingfa, et al., "Discussion of Peasant Burdens," *Jingji ribao*, Feb. 3, 1990, trans. in *JPRS-CAR*, Mar. 23, 1990, pp. 72–74.

[37]Liu Binyan, *Tell the World*, p. 157. Of course, some "peasants who have become wealthy seek to enter the party to protect their new riches from extortion by local cadres." See Stanley Rosen, "Political Education and Student Response: Some Background Factors Behind the 1989 Beijing Demonstrations," *Issues and Studies*, October 1989, p. 38.

[38]"Because of its massive rural population and poor results from industrial investment . . . since 1958, urban industrialization failed to provide jobs for the natural increase in population, let alone rural migrants . . . . China . . . adopt[ed] measures even more stringent than the Soviet Union to insulate the cities from the countryside. In the 26-year period from 1952 to 1978 rural population dipped from 87.5 to 82.1 percent of the national total, an average annual decline of just 0.25 percent. The decline of the agricultural labor force as a share of the nation's total was also marginal, from 31.7 to 31.5 percent . . . it is unusual among developing nations . . . . In large measure it explains why the countryside . . . . languished." Liu Guogang, "Restructuring the Economic System Goes Hand in Hand with Developing a Community Economy, *Zhongguo shehui kexue* (Beijing), November 1986, trans. in *JPRS-CAR*, Mar. 13, 1987, p. 25.

[39]Andrew Spano, "Death of a Dream in Rural China," in George Hicks, Ed., *The Broken Mirror*, Chicago, Longman, 1990, p. 315.



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before them, while the young men peed, giggling, on the tank treads."[40] At the largest 1989 democracy rally in Nanjing, for example, it was the spokesperson for the peasantry who delivered the longest and strongest denunciation of the regime. Peasant soldiers also began to fraternize with urban democrats.

In a chapter on "The October Insurrection," in *The Russian Revolution,* Leon Trotsky noted how the general strikes that took place around the time of the February 1917 revolution created "the necessary arena for mass encounters of the workers with the [peasant] soldiers . . . for the coming over of the [peasant] soldiers to the side of the workers." Trotsky argues that "the October Revolution . . . was decided in the last analysis by the *muzhik*," the peasantry. The Kerensky government, by October, could not get a peasant garrison to follow orders. The *muzhik*s sided with the October insurrection instead, and the "peasant garrison decided the outcome of the struggle" in October.

In retrospect, the events of February 1917 proved to be a transforming experience for the peasantry. Projections of future behavior premised on the peasant soldiers' pre-February 1917 actions would have missed the change caused by the profound experience of seeing tsarism collapse. One must, therefore, be wary of interpretations of Chinese peasant consciousness in spring 1989 based on the outdated notion of an eternal and unchanging passive or satisfied peasantry. Initial accounts had the troops who were imposing martial law as "mostly of peasant background," folk who felt "nothing in common with the young people of the Chinese capital."[41] Reports of troops pulling off demonstrators' eye glasses and crushing them,[42] which recalled the virulent nativistic know-nothing Maoism that inspired Pol Pot's minions, tended to reinforce this perspective. (The massacre in Beijing gave rise to many false rumors about the military, including one story that the 27th Army was a Mongol force, and another that the troops were drugged. It was also rumored that the ranks of the army had been filled by the imprisoned poor, who were offered a chance at a new life if they joined the army.[43])

In fact, the peasantry was much more in sympathy with the demonstrators than these rumors suggest. Villagers who had flocked to the city for work participated in the spring 1989 democracy movement.[44] Student leaders who fled Beijing after June 4 are rumored to have been hidden among this mobile rural population. Harassed by police and party, these uprooted peasants tend to hate the authorities.

Estimates of wanderers from the countryside are in the 50-million range. A credit squeeze—intensified since the massacre—has slowed construction and cost hundreds of thousands of temporary laborers from the countryside their jobs. These migrants are characterized, in part, by the Chinese journal *Social Science,* as "restive outsiders," "lawless drifters," and a threat to social order. . . The days when Mao Zedong could summon peasants hither and yon are gone. The peasant of today has broadened his horizons, has a greater consciousness of commodity economics, and is more willing to take financial risks."[45] He Xin, a maverick at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, in a report well-received by the authorities, commented anxiously in 1989: "The emergence of a rootless, mobile part of the rural population has created a huge unorganized force. (It is already a hotbed of crime.) Once they get organizations with an educated leadership and a political program, the floating peasant population could be molded into a political force, a mobile, armed, and formidable anti-social coalition."[46]

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[40]Jonathan Mirsky, "The Empire Strikes Back," *The New York Review of Books,* Feb. 1, 1990, p. 24. Also Hinton, op. cit., p. 176.

[41]*Massacre in Beijing,* p. 35.

[42]Ibid., p. 59.

[43]In reality, the slaughter was instigated by the politically loyal 27th Army and carried out by the 38th Army intent on proving it was not disloyal.

[44]The standard Chinese explanation for the lack of democracy in China is that Mao's revolution was transformed by the "extreme backwardness" of "rural areas" into "a peasant party or small peasant party," exhibiting reactionary, "selfish, parochial, and shortsighted" characteristics. (Mu Fu, "Cultural Differences Between CPC and CPSU," *Kaifang* [Hong Kong], March 1990, trans. in *JPRS-CAR,* June 19, 1990, p. 2.) Hence, Chinese see the spring 1989 democracy movement as lacking peasant participation. Actually, even the controlled Chinese press admitted active peasant participation in the spring 1989 democracy movement. "Niu Shengchang, 38, a [Shandong] villager . . . accused of having gone to Beijing on May 18 to the Peasants Autonomous Union. He . . . traveled to other localities where he posted 'reactionary' posters and distributed 'counterrevolutionary leaflets'." "Hao Fuyan, 37, a [Shandong] peasant . . . detained . . . for 'spreading reactionary statements and inciting peasants to create disturbances'." "Li Weigno, 22, a [Shandong] peasant . . . went to Beijing . . . entered the 'Dare-to-die Corps' . . . left Beijing to go to Qingdao and Yantai to make contacts . . . ." "Yan Shanbo, a [Jiangsu] peasant . . . alleged to have blocked traffic, deflated tires, and shouted counterrevolutionary slogans." "[A]rrested for killing a soldier in Beijing, Zhan Yetang, a peasant . . . ." "Pang Fuzhong, a peasant from Shanxi Province, was arrested . . . for burning military vehicles . . . ." "Li Zixin, a 20-year-old peasant . . . arrested for having joined a group attempting to stop military vehicles . . . ." "An unidentified [Shandong] peasant . . . sentenced to 10 years . . . reportedly traveled to Beijing . . . to participate in pro-democracy demonstrations . . . and upon his return . . . gave 'reactionary' lectures in his home village." "Xu Guocai, a [Shenyang] peasant . . . arrested for sending 13 counterrevolutionary letters . . . ." "Bai Huijie, a [Hebei] peasant . . . was a contract laborer in Beijing . . . accused of beating up soldiers . . . ." *Punishment Season: Human Rights in China After Martial Law,* New York, Asia Watch Committee, 1990, pp. 140, 140–41, 145–46, 148, 149, 128, 129, 132, 135, 86. China's democratization is "favored because of the surprisingly entrepreneurial spirit of the people, including its peasantry . . . ." Julia Ching, *Probing China's Soul,* San Francisco, Harper and Row, 1990, p. 228.

[45]*Zhongguo shehui kexue,* Jan. 20, 1990, trans. in *JPRS-CAR,* Apr. 9, 1990, p. 67.

(Fn. 46 follows on p. 38.)



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The regime sees this mobile rural population as a threat not only in urban areas, but also seems to fear its impact on the villages.[47] In an attempt to reduce the destabilizing force of this population, Premier Li Peng called for "chopping off 17 million" of the 50 million in the cities, i.e., sending them back to the rural areas. The leadership has "ordered rural cadres to force peasants to work on water conservation projects and reclaim barren hills and unused fields . . . . to achieve the goal of controlling the peasants and preventing them from staying in the cities and 'creating disturbances'."[48]

Increasingly, villagers find that the post-Mao Leninist system does not—and cannot—serve their interests. The delegitimation of the system has been intensified by the economic policies of the post-massacre period, which have reduced urban inflation at the price of further rural unemployment and a credit squeeze on rural producers. Frightened conservative rulers are trying to force peasants back into collectives. Instead of private initiative, consumer goods, and the market, the regime in 1990 deemed sources of growth to be science, frugality, and organized large-scale production. Instead of enriching peasant households, the Minister of Agriculture promoted "management to scale," and called on peasants to "rely on collective economic bodies to run undertakings" and turn "consumption funds into production funds."[49] In short, the successful microeconomics of the household was once again to yield to the statist "system of macroeconomic regulation and control."[50] State control over productive inputs—from farm machinery to credit—is used to coerce tillers to devote more acreage to grain and "is equivalent to disguised collectivization."[51] The official line in mid-1990 was that everything could be recollectivized except the land.

In the wake of the spring 1989 democracy movement, the Fourth Plenum of the 13th Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party in June 1989 dismissed Du Runsheng, director of the Rural Policy Research Center, the think tank for rural reform. In November, at the Fifth Plenum, Premier Li Peng criticized the household farming system that had raised peasant

*Du Runsheng, former director of China's Rural Policy Research Center.*

**AP/Wideworld Photos.**

living standards and instead "encouraged peasants to explore collective means of farming." The new policy line called for asuterity, tight credit, and cultivation of basic crops, not remunerative cash crops.[52] In Henan province rumors of imminent recollectivization were rampant and led peasants "to sell their large farm tools and machines and fell trees in the fields."[53] By spring 1990, the anti-reform government held up for emulation villagers who had been "reluctant to have public land divided among village families. Furthermore, they [the leaders] saw the responsibility system as likely giving rise to social polarization. In light of the villagers' wishes, village leaders decided to continue work as a

[46]"An Analysis of the Current Student Protests and Forecasts Concerning the Situation," *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, January 1990, pp. 68–69.

[47]Indicatively, Wan Runnan noted: "There are 40 million migrant workers and vagrants. A major reason why . . . [they] did not become roving bands of rebels is the self-defense capability of every locality." See *Cheng Ming*, Dec. 1, 1989, trans. in *JPRS-CAR*, Mar. 5, 1990, p. 7.

[48]Cai Senhe, "From 'After Hours Meetings' to 'Cut Out 17 Million'," *Chao Liu* (Hong Kong), Feb. 15, 1990, trans. in *JPRS-CAR*, May 29, 1990, p. 18.

[49]*Qiushi* (Beijing), Apr. 1, 1990, trans. in *JPRS-CAR*, May 30, 1990, pp. 32–37.

[50]Ibid.

[51]Prybyla, "Why China's Economic Reforms Fail," p. 1028.

[52]David Shambaugh, "The Fourth and Fifth Plenary Session of the 13th CCP Central Committee," *China Quarterly* (London), December 1989, pp. 854, 861, 860.

[53]*Henan ribao* (Zhengzhou), Nov. 16, 1989, from a conference paper by Nina Halpern.



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collective body."[54] In an attempt to woo urban workers by increasing food subsidies (based on low farmgate prices) and by guaranteeing unemployed workers full payment of previous wages, the conservative regime chose to alienate villagers. Recollectivization has all the attraction for villagers that the renewed campaign to emulate selfless soldier Lei Feng has for urban youth. The explosive scenario for the countryside of early 1989 remains a live prospect in the 1990's.[55]

The institution of anti-peasant policies by the post-Mao conservatives may produce a peasantry that can be mobilized for systematic anti-regime activities. However, the potential for this mobilization is not always visible. The Chinese police state suppresses news of rural protests expressing "hatred and fury" in much the same way as it quashes news of expressions of popular outrage in Tibet.[56] Nevertheless, the evidence of peasant discontent is there, and on occasion it surfaces in the Chinese press.

*[W]hat is particularly galling to peasants is . . . that corrupt officials have been creating artificial chemical-fertilizer shortages during the planting season in order to jack up prices. In response, in one recent year, according to China's own press, several million peasants took the law into their own hands in 100,000 separate incidents, looting fertilizer plants and desperately waylaying trucks bearing fertilizer . . . . the army had to be called upon to guard supplies, and unknown numbers of peasants were killed . . . . Officials out for a quick buck . . . [sell] dead seed-grain to peasants, who subsequently were reduced to hunger when their crops did not germinate. This corruption, and the ensuing . . . rural violence . . . has signaled . . . that the government was . . . losing control over its own functionaries and the populace . . . .*[57]

## Conservative Reaction

The hidden story is that the beneficiaries of Stalinist-Maoism, the conservatives in the party-state apparatuses and state employees, may be cementing a coalition against democrats and peasants. Far from being frightened of reforms, polls show that farmers are far more open to risk-taking than are factory workers.[58] It is the urban state employees who oppose a free labor market, largely because it would permit peasants to enter cities as they please. The reformers never abolished the household registration system, which locks villagers into their home villages,[59] because they were well aware of the opposition that would have met this move. Ever since decollectivization, local officials in the cities have bitterly opposed it, claiming "the rich are getting richer, while the poor are left without.[60]

What conservatives really mean when they say that they want policies to prevent polarization is to reimpose low farmgate prices and coerced corvée labor in order to ensure cheap grain for those on urban state payrolls. All Stalinist-Maoist command economy methods can do is expand the extensive mobilization of labor or redistribute the benefits which the state monopolizes. To be sure, the conservatives may intend to benefit the rural poor, but all one senior party official offered as an example of the new concern for the rural poor was the priority now being given to poor women from hinterland Anhui for getting jobs as servants, maids, washerwomen, and amahs for families of top government functionaries in Beijing.

By attempting to lead China back to a narrow nationalism aimed at ridding the country of foreign pollutants, Deng has discredited himself with the rural young.[61]

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[54] *Beijing Review*, Apr. 30–May 6, 1990, p. 25.

[55] In January 1990, the rulers tried to reassure urban dwellers by rigorously implementing identity card controls first promulgated in 1986. Beijing residents were told that the rural influx would be halved. Despite attempts to woo the urban state sector factory workers with promises of upgrading their wage scale status over the next two years, urban worker discontent remained so strong that by January 1990, factories with more than half a million workers in some 30 cities applied for government permits to demonstrate. The government blocked the demonstrations.

[56] Liu Binyan, *Tell the World*, pp. 148ff.

[57] Anita Chan, "China's Long Winter," *Monthly Review* (New York), January 1990, p. 4. According to Zhan Gang, "It is not an uncommon occurrence to palm off false goods among the means of production . . . . In 1988, a seed company . . . passed off [a fake] . . . as radish seed . . . . This cut off the income [of] 200,000 peasant households in Shaanxi and Henan." See "The Filthy Stream," *Shehui* (Shanghai), Jan. 20, 1990, trans. in *JPRS-CAR*, May 17, 1990, p. 75. Jonathan Unger has also noted: "Some of the poorest in the countryside . . . today face starvation." See Unger, op. cit., p. 134.

[58] Lam, op. cit, p. 85.

[59] "Anyone born in the city enjoys, as if by birthright, modestly priced agricultural products provided by 'planned state marketing' [and] generous state subsidies, as well as education, jobs, and medical services provided by the state. Furthermore, the bigger the city, the bigger the benefits and the more valuable the residency permit. One's household registration generally determines the fate of a person, a family, or even of several generations. If one is to change one's fate, one must first change household registration." Quoted from *Zhongguo qingnian bao*, June 9, 1989, trans. in *JPRS-CAR*, Oct. 5, 1989, p. 5.

[60] Actually the data show that post-Mao rural incomes soared in the 1979–85 era, whereas they "largely stagnated in rural China from 1956 to 1978, during the era of Maoist egalitarian collectivism." See Victor Nee and Su Sijin, "Institutional Change and Economic Growth in China: The View from the Villages," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, February 1990, pp. 7, 21.

[61] This is not to suggest that Chinese soil will reject seeds of nativism. The Goddess of Democracy, although the face follows a Soviet Russian model and two hands hold the torch (in contrast with the Statue of Liberty), was experienced even by cosmopolitans in Beijing as so foreign as to be alienating and delegitimating of a movement claiming to be patriotic. Even though polling data show blind patriotism in decline among young Chinese, the regime can fan burning hot chauvinistic embers into passionate flames of nativistic hate.



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Sure of their patriotism, they feel trapped, but seek to break out and prosper in the 21st century. Each time the conservative rulers ignore the deepest wishes and interests of the village peasantry and instead brag about the rural prosperity the Deng-era reforms have brought to the countryside, most villagers, especially the younger ones, but even the northern ones, are persuaded that this exploitative government lies and must fall.[62] "The peasants most hate the local county party secretaries, for they are incapable of doing anything other than extorting money earned with the peasants' blood and sweat and gorging themselves until they are fat and their faces greasy and shiny."[63]

In contrast to the Russian peasant who endured 60 years of collectivization in the Soviet Union, the Chinese peasants suffered only 20 years of such demoralizing dependency. As a result, they did not become denatured like the Russian peasant. In addition, rural China's entrepreneurial tradition of initiative in the market for the benefit of the lineage helped to keep peasant commercial instincts intact in China.[64] Indeed, the heavily populated villages in the countryside never quite abandoned the practice of periodic markets that kept peasants within a couple of miles of a market on any given day. The large majority of peasant households leaped to grab the economic opportunities of reform. The current conservative turn against reform threatens large numbers of villagers whose wealth had expanded greatly since 1979, and increases their receptivity to appeals by democrats and reformers.

A decollectivized peasantry, stalemated reforms, and split ruling group fixated on holding on to power even to the detriment of the economy is reminiscent of Poland in the 1970's and 1980's. Enumerating the ways in which the two countries differ—the role of the Church in Poland facilitated opposition, the role of distance and regional particulars in China limits central control—although important, leads one to miss the major commonality that China shares with other Leninist states: the regime is in crisis, and the crisis cannot be resolved within the constraints of a Leninist system.[65]

Much of the pace and pattern of agrarian reform in China closely resembles that of Eastern and Central Europe. The better-off, more mechanized collectives on the outskirts of urban areas, whose members had relatives working in state factories were, in China, as elsewhere, the slowest to respond to the reforms. These collectives had benefited from a distribution system that reflected the priorities of the urban-oriented state. It was the poorest in the hinterland who pressed ahead fastest on reform. Nevertheless, because local officials were so corrupt, and because anti-reform policies were so unpalatable, by 1989, even suburban villagers were siding with the democracy movement. Thus, the conservative Leninist regime lacks legitimacy in the countryside. Indeed, it is so discredited that it may not be able to hold the fragmenting nation together.

## Centrifugal Forces

The urban-rural tensions are exacerbated by uneven regional economic development. The southern and coastal regions, which are integrated into the world market, tend to oppose the policies of the post-massacre rulers who, in turn, tend to pull back from Pacific Rim integration. But opposition to conservative policies is not limited to the south—even in the traditionally conservative northern and hinterland areas, the young have been looking for better life opportunities. One should take seriously reports of "protests by high school students in small towns in rural areas" in the heady spring of 1989.[66] The rural young are aware of the liberation promised by modernity, openness, and individualism, and they strongly desire to abandon age-old patriarchal traditions.[67]

Moreover, partial reform in a Leninist state produces a strong tendency toward localism. The new mobility of labor, accompanied by the old system of distribution by locale, creates local shortages. The resultant attempt to retain gains in one's own region leads local governments to block trade with other areas that are seen as looters of one's resources. Similar tendencies existed in the marketizing Leninist states of Europe. This erection of feudal-like barriers in China is referred to as *zhuhou jingji,* the economy of feudal lords. What is peculiar about China is the perception that a feudal monarch in the north lives off the wealth of the south.

The internal struggles over how to distribute profits earned by dynamic coastal and southern regions threatens to rip apart the Chinese social fabric. Although the patience and generosity of those who feel they have already waited too long and have been fooled too often is fast running out, the power holders in

[62]Liu Binyan, *Tell the World,* pp. 182–85.

[63]Ibid., p. 52.

[64]Dwight Perkins, *China: Asia's Next Giant?* Seattle, WA, University of Washington Press, 1986.

[65]Edward Friedman, "Three Leninist Paths Within a Socialist Conundrum," Dorothy Solinger, Ed., *Three Visions of Chinese Socialism,* Boulder, CO, Westview, 1984, pp. 11–45.

[66]Han Minzhu, op. cit., p. 278.

[67]Elders who experienced Mao's Great Leap famine are much more susceptible to conservative appeals of minimum guarantees. The cause is generational and historical, not cultural and sociological.



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*Two members of Xiatang People's Commune in Zhejiang province examine the stock at a chicken farm in which they personally invested 25,100 yuan.*

**Eastfoto.**

Beijing, the north, and the hinterland continue to take the maximum from the fast growing areas that benefited most from reforms. A budget crisis imposes this imperative. The move to a tax system instead of the cost-plus system of the traditional command economy has proved to be a slow and leaky reform, and the center cannot pay for its expenditures.[68] It therefore seeks to recentralize and grab the surplus from the successful. However, as coastal regions grow more resistant to this policy, establishing a legitimate tax system may be a life-or-death issue for the nation.

All these contradictions, which are the legacy of the Leninist system, have no painless solution. But a democratic process in setting the reform agenda leading to equitable compromises could institutionalize a process that would make the pain seem more bearable, or at any rate fairer. Some American reporters concluded that full economic "reform might have been possible if Deng and his colleagues had been ready for political reform as well. By providing an institutional escape valve for the people, with free elections at least at the local level, it may have been possible to persuade them to accept necessary but painful measures."[69] Short of full-scale political reform, however, the financial crisis that threatens to splinter the nation can best be resolved by a tax system premised on popular representation. Without such a political transformation, the financial crisis can turn into a revolutionary crisis.

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[68]According to one observer, "fiscal reform . . . has given local government incentive . . . to boost revenue . . . . it strengthens local interests and weakens central macroeconomic regulatory-control capability . . . causing . . . regional autarky . . . the establishment of checkpoints and border guards to prevent outflows of producer goods and materials in short supply . . . and the central government gets boxed out of its revenues . . . the share of state revenue in national income has fallen, reaching a mere 19 percent in 1988, when the central government accounted for only 40 percent of all government revenue. Indeed, revenues are falling in absolute terms." See Jiang Yiwei, "How Can We Advance Reform and Opening While Upholding the Four Cardinal Principles?" *Gaige* (Chongqing), Sept. 20, 1989, trans. in *JPRS-CAR*, Nov. 30, 1989, p. 21.

[69]*Massacre in Beijing*, p. 114.



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*A member of the Young Pioneers holds up her arm in a salute to the Chinese Communist Party on April 23, 1990, in front of a giant billboard of Lei Feng, the model soldier and national superhero.*

**Reuters-Bettman.**

At the Fifth Plenary Session of the 13th Central Committee in November 1989, Party General Secretary Jiang Zemin urged local leaders not to obstruct recentralization on the excuse of local characteristics. However, regional distinctiveness has a long history in China. In 1962, Mao criticized those who said: "In Canton, some people say, when you hear a train whistle going south, it is like 'to the bright lights'; and the sound going north is 'hopeless,' 'hopeless'."[70] The southern coastal areas—all of whose residents speak languages incomprehensible in Beijing, and who see northerners in terms of negative stereotypes—have a great potential for autonomy. So does the successful peasantry.

A policy that combines democratic local government with a national center strong enough to coordinate regional forces and deal with global challenges could appeal to the southern coast and to hinterland villagers. By contrast, conservative insistence on a self-serving centralization cannot help but force local interests to bypass the center. Despite the fact that many observers have misleadingly focused on China's fantastic rural success between 1979 and 1984, and wrongly concluded that a passive peasantry willingly supports the Deng regime, it is important not to ignore the post-1984 developments: the reassertion of the traditional socialist system, the struggle against it, and the consequent potential for explosion. Whether the end result will be dictatorship, democracy, or disintegration depends to a significant degree on whom and what China's variegated peasantry supports.

Meanwhile, the conservatives are invoking a most reactionary and nativistic program. They have kept alive Potemkin village collectives in rural China, waiting for the day when the Stalinist system could reassert itself. Maoism is an ideology that tries to delegitimate the peasants' material interests in favor of a simple life based on nativistic hates. The conservatives are reduced to relying on naked Stalinist force and the crude chauvinistic appeals of Maoism, while attempting to emulate East Asian economic success. Because Deng believes that the Japan model, successful throughout East Asia, combines a Confucian culture with a congruent authoritarian polity, he insists that democracy in China would bring chaos. Urban democrats, who are condescending toward peasant particularism, often share this world view and do not attempt to ally with peasants.

## Peasant Democratic Potential

Yet, democratization is taking root all over Confucian East Asia, as well as in Mongolia. Its utility is not negated by an authoritarian cultural tradition. Analysts offer three paradigms for comprehending democratization —cultural, class, and political. The cultural view, which stresses the need for a pre-existing culture incorporating conceptions of individual rights and obligations, cannot explain the democratization of still traditional authoritarian societies. The class view, which stresses the need for a large middle class of professionals who value autonomy and limits on state power, cannot explain the democratization of so many non-middle-class societies. Whatever important partial truths are embodied in cultural and class analyses, only the political paradigm, which stresses how a state-society crisis creates a political opportunity for democratization, can explain the dynamics of democratization in late 20th-century Leninist states. These systems alienated much of society, split the leadership, and prevented the state

[70] *Mao Zedong Sixiang wan sui* (Long Live Mao Zedong Thought), Beijing, 1967, p. 315.



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from delivering the benefits of a post-industrial world.[71] This systemic flaw virtually guarantees that more opportunities for democratic initiatives will appear.

It is impossible for Leninist states to emulate successfully the Japan model that was made possible by, among other things, a professional civil service of former feudal lords dedicated to service and loyalty. Top graduates of the best schools sought such service. They had prestige and were relatively incorruptible.[72] Neither feature appears in Leninist *nomenklatura* bureaucracies, which are held in popular contempt for their greed, pervasive corruption, and incompetence.

This is especially true in China's countryside. The networks of personal loyalty in a non-reformed Leninist dictatorship are incapable of prestigious, professional service, and they undermine decent policy initiatives from the center.[73] Indeed, this has already happened in rural China, and has made of the peasantry cynical victims, alienated and outraged opponents, or co-opted crooks. This is not a political soil in which economic reform can flourish. It is a cause of crisis and outrage. Democratization is a better bet to nurture the forces generating self-sustaining prosperity.

It would not be difficult for democrats to devise policies to woo rural dwellers. What is primarily required is a change in attitude and action, a willingness to see and include peasants in the democratic coalition.[74] Peasants have participated in democratic coalitions and have found real and vital interests in economic reform. The political initiative in China lies with conservatives opposed to reform who play to the fears of chauvinists, entrenched officials, and anxious urban workers. The Chinese experience in the countryside suggests that without including the peasantry in the political reforms of *glasnost'*, it is less likely that economic reforms can sustain the payoff from agrarian *perestroyka*.[75] *Perestroyka* without *glasnost'* can be reversed.

[71]See Edward Friedman, "Permanent Technological Revolution and China's Tortuous Path to Democratizing Leninism," in Richard Baum, Ed., *Reform and Reaction in Post-Mao China*, New York, Routledge, 1990.

[72]Taiwan's bureaucracy was purified by defeat in the Chinese civil war; afterward the most egregiously corrupt officials preferred Park Avenue to Taipei. South Korea's bureaucracy was purified by young officers in the 1960's who threatened death to the corrupt, and cleaned up much of the dirty mess left behind by the economically stagnant authoritarian Rhee regime.

[73]In the 1988 debate over neo-authoritarianism in China, Su Shaozhi, director of the Marxism-Leninism Institute, pointed out this and other reasons why continuing authoritarianism would obstruct economic success in China. See Su's, "Some Problems of the Political Reform in China," *China Information* (Leiden), Autumn 1988, pp. 32–37.

[74]William Hinton advises China's democratic students "to go to the people . . . to start dealing with the nitty-gritty issues of peasants' rights . . . to defend land use rights and protect peasants against adverse price scissors." See Hinton, op. cit., p. 191.

[75]This paper was given to a senior Chinese government researcher on rural China for criticism. Three criticisms were made: (1) illiterates cannot be the basis of democracy; (2) peasants care about their stomachs and economics, not politics and who heads the government in the capital; (3) to cite Liu Binyan, a mere journalist, and not a scientific analyst of agriculture, discredits the data.



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# Labor Policy in China: Reform and Retrogression

**Jeanne L. Wilson**

Events of the spring of 1989 in China exposed the tensions both within the country's leadership and between it and the urban citizenry that had accumulated in over a decade of reform. As the leadership became deadlocked over how to resolve the crisis created by the student pro-democracy movement, the social basis of the movement expanded to include urban dwellers from all walks of life. Unlike the student demonstrations of December 1986–January 1987, in which the workers had largely stood on the sidelines as passive observers, the 1989 pro-democracy movement increasingly engaged the support and participation of the Chinese working class. Following the example of the students, who set up their own independent organizations, small groups of workers in Beijing and other cities formed independent trade unions. Sympathy for the pro-democracy cause, moreover, appears to have been widespread among cadres within the official ranks of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU). Blue-collar and white-collar workers were among the one million or more people who marched on May 17, 1989, in support of the students on hunger strike in Tiananmen Square. The regime's resort to military force succeeded in bringing the demonstrations to an abrupt conclusion, but only exacerbated the strains that had given rise to the movement in the first place. The Communist leadership faces a legitimacy crisis of proportions unprecedented in the post-1949 experience of the People's Republic of China.

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In the year since Tiananmen, the leadership has been mired in factional struggle, the final outcome of which must wait until the geriatric old guard passes from the political scene. In the short run, the conservatives have gained the upper hand over reformist or moderate elements, as reflected in a reshuffling of leadership positions, but their strength has not been sufficient to eradicate the legacy of a decade of reform. Although his personal power has eroded, Deng Xiaoping still remains China's most powerful leader. He still believes in economic reform, but now seems obsessed with the maintenance of political stability by traditional Marxist-Leninist means, lest economic reform spill over into the sort of change witnessed in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union in 1989.

While Deng has remained committed to economic restructuring, other more conservative members of the Chinese leadership have sought to reverse China's move toward a reliance on market forces with a return to the centralization and planning measures traditionally associated with a Soviet-style economy. The consequent incoherence and inconsistency of the Chinese policy process at present, as first one and then another faction of the elite temporarily gains control over the elaboration of policies, is not in itself a novelty on the Chinese political scene. As has often been noted, China's decade-long experiment with economic reform evolved without an overall blueprint for change; it was the product of struggle and compromise among competing factions of the leadership.[1] The question nonetheless remains whether or not the Tiananmen events constituted a watershed in the evolution of the Chinese

[1]The reform process is analyzed thoroughly in Harry Harding, *China's Revolution: Reform After Mao*, Washington, DC, The Brookings Institution, 1987.



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*Workers signing up as members of the Beijing Workers' Autonomous Federation in the spring of 1989.*

**—Asian-American Free Labor Institute.**

reform movement. What continuities exist in policy-making before and after Tiananmen? To what extent have reform initiatives been jettisoned or placed on hold?

This article seeks to examine these questions with respect to one component of the reform process—the elaboration of labor policy. The first part of this article investigates the impact of a decade of reform on participants in the urban labor force with a focus on three areas: (1) changes in the structure of employment; (2) efforts to carry out a labor reform; and (3) policy regarding trade unions and schemes for democratization within the workplace. Second, I discuss worker and trade union participation in the pro-democracy movement, with a view to assessing factors contributing to the rise of grievances against the leadership and its policies. The final section turns to the issue of how the leadership has approached labor policy in the wake of Tiananmen. It will be argued that although China's leaders have retreated to Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy in defining the relationship of the party to the working class, they have have not felt free to reverse all aspects of a decade of reform.

## Changes in Labor Force Composition

Prior to the formal initiation of the reform movement at the Third Plenum of the 11th CCP Central Committee in 1978, China possessed a highly stratified employment structure with sharply curtailed labor mobility. Since rural-urban migration had been officially prohibited in the late 1950's, 76 percent of China's total labor force still lived in rural areas in 1978. Although Maoist-era policy favored the institution of small-scale rural industries, only about 10 percent of the total rural labor force was engaged in nonagricultural pursuits. Members of the urban labor force found employment in either state



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**Table 1: Distribution of China's Labor Force, 1978–88**

**(year-end figures, in 10,000's)**

| Year | Total | Blue- and white-collar employees | In state units | In collective units in cities and towns | In units of joint ownership* | Individual laborers in cities | Collective and individual laborers in rural areas | Engaged in agriculture |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1978 | 40,152 | 9.499 | 7,451 | 2,048 | | 15 | 30,638 | 27,488 |
| 1979 | 41,024 | 9.967 | 7,693 | 2,274 | | 32 | 31,025 | 27,835 |
| 1980 | 42,361 | 10,444 | 8,019 | 2,425 | | 81 | 31,836 | 28,334 |
| 1981 | 43,725 | 10,940 | 8,372 | 2,568 | | 113 | 32,672 | 28,980 |
| 1982 | 45,295 | 11,281 | 8,630 | 2,651 | | 147 | 33,867 | 30,062 |
| 1983 | 46,436 | 11,515 | 8,771 | 2,744 | | 231 | 34,690 | 30,350 |
| 1984 | 48,197 | 11,890 | 8,637 | 3,216 | 37 | 339 | 35.968 | 30,080 |
| 1985 | 49,873 | 12.358 | 8,990 | 3,324 | 44 | 450 | 37,065 | 30,351 |
| 1986 | 51,282 | 12,809 | 9,333 | 3,421 | 55 | 483 | 37,990 | 30,468 |
| 1987 | 52,783 | 13,214 | 9,654 | 3,488 | 72 | 569 | 39,000 | 30,870 |
| 1988 | 54,334 | 13,608 | 9,984 | 3,527 | 97 | 659 | 40,067 | 31,456 |

*Units of joint ownership include enterprises of joint state and collective ownership, joint Chinese and foreign ownership, overseas Chinese ownership, Hong Kong and Macau ownership, and foreign-owned enterprises.

SOURCE: *Zhongguo tongji nianjian, 1989* (Statistical Yearbook of China, 1989), Beijing, Zhongguo tongji chubanshe, 1989, pp. 101, 120.

or collective enterprises. State enterprises, heralded in the Maoist era as a superior form of ownership, tended to provide higher wages and, more important, a generous array of benefits compared to firms in the collective sector. The latter, however, varied considerably, ranging from "large collective factories" (*da jiti gongchang*), where wages were comparatively high and benefits generous, to small-scale handicraft cooperatives under local jurisdiction, where wages were low and benefits nonexistent.

Workers were classified as either permanent or nonpermanent employees, reflecting a complex proliferation of forms of temporary employment in response to the structural rigidities of the system of labor allocation and the cyclical and seasonal demands for labor. Nonpermanent workers generally, but not always, received lower wages than permanent workers in the state sector and were usually ineligible for most social welfare benefits.[2] Following a decade of relentless suppression during the Cultural Revolution, private entrepreneurial activity was negligible.

By the late 1970's, Chinese citizens were increasingly locked into an employment structure in which birth determined destiny. Demographic pressures produced by the doubling of the population since 1949 (to over 1 billion) contributed to the creation of a huge pool of surplus labor in both the countryside and the cities. While surplus labor in rural areas was more easily disguised through the addition of unnecessary labor inputs to agriculture, the annual coming-of-age of several million urban middle-school graduates and the return of "rusticated" youths from the countryside made it impossible for the state to honor its commitment—long heralded as a sign of the superiority of the socialist system—to provide each urban dweller with a job.[3] Labor mobility and labor turnover were extremely constricted by the near-complete absence of market mechanisms for allocating labor. Moreover, as demand for highly valued jobs in the state sector of industry began to outpace supply, a system in which children inherited the position of retiring parents (*dingti* or the so-called substitution system) evolved. In addition, some enterprises embarked upon the construction of subsidiaries for the sole purpose of employing the children of its employees.[4]

In the decade after 1978, the Deng Xiaoping leadership moved to correct those aspects of the Maoist-de-

[2]For further discussion of the structure of the labor force in the late 1970's, see Andrew G. Walder, *Communist Neo-Traditionalism: Work and Authority in Chinese Industry*, Berkeley, CA, University of California Press, 1986, Chap. 2.

[3]See John Philip Emerson, "Urban School-leavers and Unemployment in China," *The China Quarterly* (London), March 1983, pp. 1–16.

[4]See Susan L. Shirk, "Recent Chinese Labour Policies and the Transformation of Industrial Organization in China," *The China Quarterly*, December 1981, pp. 575–93; and John Phillip Emerson, "The Labor Force of China: 1957–1980," in US Congress, Joint Economic Committee, *China Under the Four Modernizations*, US Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 1982, pp. 224–67.



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rived employment structure seen as incompatible with the dictates of reform. The reformers argued that limited forms of private property and the development of collective rather than state forms of productive ownership were not only legitimate but necessary given the low level of development of the productive forces in the PRC. The introduction of the contract responsibility system in the countryside provided for the de facto transfer of property rights to the peasant household, which, as a result, emerged as the predominant unit of agricultural production. The development of a private sector of productive activity, including forms of investment by foreign capital, was sanctioned. Traditional distinctions between the private and the public spheres, moreover, became increasingly blurred with the development of a diverse array of productive units operated on a lease or contract basis and the rapid growth of village and township enterprises, in which it was often difficult to distinguish between collective and private forms of ownership.

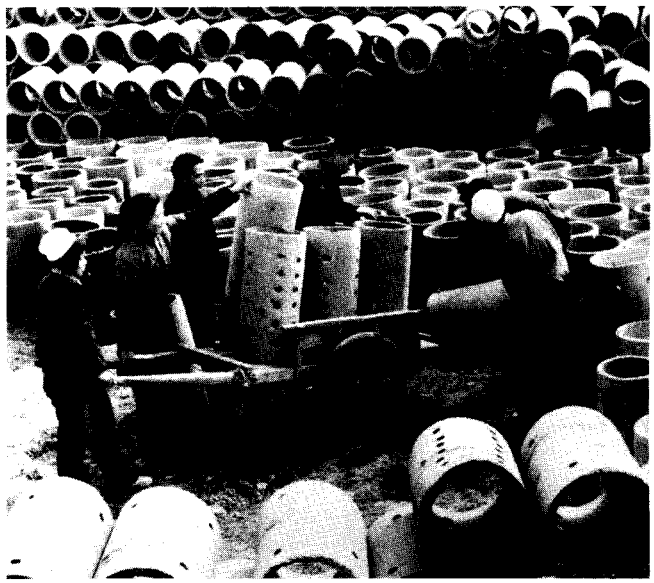
A decade of reform produced significant, if incremental, changes in the composition of the Chinese labor force (see Tables 1 and 2). In effect, there was less a fundamental restructuring of the pre-1978 system than the grafting of new forms and types of employment upon it. As Table 2 shows, there was a modest decline in the percentage of workers employed in the state (as opposed to the collective) sector, although this proportion was rising again toward the end of the period. Also adding to the number of salaried blue- and white-collar workers during this time were persons employed in enterprises of joint ownership, including enterprises funded in part or in their entirety by foreign capital. By 1988,

**Table 2: Distribution of White- and Blue-Collar Workers in China's Labor Force by Sector, 1978–79**

**(in percent)**

| Year | Total | State-owned units | Collective units in cities and towns | Units of joint ownership |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1978 | 100 | 78.4 | 21.6 | |
| 1979 | 100 | 77.2 | 22.8 | |
| 1980 | 100 | 76.8 | 23.2 | |
| 1981 | 100 | 76.5 | 23.4 | |
| 1982 | 100 | 76.5 | 23.5 | |
| 1983 | 100 | 72.6 | 23.8 | |
| 1984 | 100 | 72.6 | 27.0 | .3 |
| 1985 | 100 | 72.7 | 26.9 | .4 |
| 1986 | 100 | 72.9 | 26.7 | .4 |
| 1987 | 100 | 73.1 | 26.4 | .5 |
| 1988 | 100 | 73.4 | 25.9 | .7 |

SOURCE: Derived from Table 1



*Workers at a ceramic factory run by a township in the suburbs of Jinang, Shandong province, in December 1985.*

**—Eastfoto.**

employment in this sector of the economy had reached 967,373.[5]

The reforms created millions of new jobs outside the formal domain of the state. As is evident from Table 1, by the year 1988, fully 21.5 percent of the labor force in rural areas, or approximately 86,110,000 people, were engaged in nonagricultural pursuits, up from 10.3 percent in 1978. Enterprises run by villages and townships (which are not considered part of the state or collective sectors in Chinese statistics), emerged as key institutions for absorbing surplus labor: these units were reported to have employed 48,939,400 persons in 1988 (roughly evenly divided between township and village enterprises) compared with 29,997,000 in 1980.[6]

In addition, forms of private labor activity increased dramatically in both the rural and urban areas of China. Calculations of the private sector in China rely heavily on estimates, with official data generally assumed to understate the extent of private entrepreneurial activity.[7] Such data also make a distinction—officially sanc-

[5]This figure includes 280,380 persons employed in joint ventures between Chinese and foreign investors, 18,706 persons employed in enterprises owned fully by overseas Chinese or Macau investors, and 6,939 persons employed in enterprises wholly owned by foreign capital. *Zhongguo tongji nianjian, 1989* (Statistical Yearbook of China, 1989), Beijing, Zhongguo tongji chubanshe, 1989, p. 117.

[6]Ibid., p. 241; *China Rural Statistics, 1988*, Westport, CT, Praeger, 1988, p. 8.

[7]See Thomas B. Gold, "Urban Private Business in China," *Studies in Comparative Communism* (Berkeley, CA), Summer/Autumn 1989, pp. 187–202.



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**Table 3: Newly Employed Persons in Cities and Towns**

| | Numbers employed, in 10,000's | | | | | Share of those employed, in percent | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1979 | 1981 | 1984 | 1987 | 1988 | 1979 | 1981 | 1984 | 1987 | 1988 |
| TOTAL: | 902.6 | 820.0 | 721.5 | 799.1 | 844.3 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| MAIN SOURCES OF EMPLOYEES: | | | | | | | | | | |
| Urban labor force | 688.5 | 534.3 | 449.7 | 411.7 | 422.6 | 76.3 | 65.2 | 62.3 | 51.5 | 50.0 |
| Rural labor force | 70.8 | 92.0 | 123.0 | 166.8 | 159.9 | 7.8 | 11.2 | 17.0 | 20.9 | 18.9 |
| College, secondary, and technical school graduates | 33.4 | 107.9 | 81.7 | 117.1 | 130.8 | 3.7 | 13.2 | 11.3 | 14.7 | 15.5 |
| Others | 109.9 | 85.8 | 67.1 | 103.5 | 131.0 | 12.2 | 10.5 | 9.3 | 13.0 | 15.5 |
| SECTOR ASSIGNED TO: | | | | | | | | | | |
| State-owned units | 567.5 | 521.0 | 415.6 | 499.4 | 492.2 | 62.9 | 63.5 | 57.6 | 62.5 | 58.3 |
| Collective units in cities and towns | 318.1 | 267.1 | 197.3 | 214.0 | 263.2 | 35.2 | 32.6 | 27.3 | 26.8 | 31.2 |
| Self-employment | 17.0 | 31.9 | 108.6 | 85.7 | 88.9 | 1.9 | 3.9 | 15.1 | 10.7 | 10.5 |

SOURCES: *Zhongguo tongji nianjian, 1989*, p. 123; *People's Republic of China Yearbook, 1988*, Beijing, Xinhua Publishing House, 1988, p. 520

tioned at the National People's Congress in April 1988—between forms of private labor activity involving the self-employed and forms of private labor activity involving the enterprise, defined as a productive unit whose owner hires more than seven employees. On the national scene, some 14.13 million enterprises were reported to have employed 26.24 million persons in 1988.[8] Table 1 indicates that the number of individuals engaged in private labor in cities and towns in China rose from 150,000 in 1978 to 6,590,000 in 1988, a figure that comprised about 4.6 percent of the urban labor force. According to a 1986 estimate by Liu Guoguang, a vice-president of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, approximately 1 percent of peasant households in rural areas hired labor, with one-quarter of those hiring more than seven employees; this constituted 2–3 percent of the total rural labor force.[9] Privatization made its greatest inroads in China's coastal regions, which have a tradition of commercial activity, whereas inland provinces tended to be more resistant to change.

Restrictions on peasant movement were loosened somewhat with the enactment of a regulation in 1983 that allowed peasants to work in market towns and of another in 1984 which allowed peasants to transfer their household registration to small towns (*jizhen*).[10] By the end of the decade, millions of peasants, up to 30 million by one count, had flooded into Chinese cities and towns seeking work.[11] The percentage of the labor force located in the countryside declined from 76.3 percent of the total in 1978 to 73.7 percent in 1988 (calculated from Table 1), and the percentage of new jobs in urban areas filled by rural dwellers rose from 7.8 percent in 1978 to 20.9 percent in 1987, declining slightly to 18.9 percent in 1988 (see Table 3). In the early years of the reform movement, rural-urban migration also included a steady stream of educated youth returning to the cities after having been "sent down" to the countryside during the Cultural Revolution.

Despite widespread overstaffing and several million young people "waiting for work," an estimated 15 million job vacancies existed in the industrial economy in the late 1980's, mostly in those industries—such as textiles, mining, and machine-building—where working conditions were arduous and wages and benefits relatively low. Shunned by city dwellers, these jobs increasingly came to be filled by peasants, who were typically hired as temporary workers, often on a contract or seasonal basis. In 1988, for example, an estimated 650,000 peasants had jobs in Beijing, ranging from work in construction and textiles to employment as nannies and housemaids.[12] From a macro-economic perspective, such labor transfers in a situation of overall labor surplus were clearly irrational and imposed additional costs on the state. But despite the existence of nominal

[8]Ibid., p. 197.

[9]*Zhongguo shehui kexue* (Beijing), No. 6, 1986, p. 14, as quoted in V. G. Gelbras, "Economic Reform in the PRC and a Discussion of Problems of Ownership of the Means of Production," *Rabochiy Klass i Sovremenniy Mir* (Moscow), March-April 1988, p. 60.

[10]Jeffrey R. Taylor, ""Rural Employment Trends and the Legacy of Surplus Labour," *The China Quarterly*, December 1988, p. 759.

[11]Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Daily Report: China* (Washington, DC—hereafter, *FBIS-CHI*), Sept. 15, 1989, p. 37.

[12]Ibid., June 1, 1989, p. 50.



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controls, the territorial decentralization of authority under the reforms meant a significant lessening of the state's ability to regulate the movement of rural labor.

## Carrying Out a Labor Reform

Prior to the ascendance of the Deng Xiaoping leadership, China trumpeted as one of the triumphs of socialism the employment structure that had evolved since 1949. This structure, which provided employees in the state sector of the economy with a minimum standard of living in a secure noncompetitive work environment replete with subsidies and welfare benefits, replicated, albeit with some distinctive Chinese characteristics, the employment structure prevalent throughout the communist world. It also served as a major means of legitimating the authority of the party vis-à-vis the working class. It was assumed that the state had the responsibility to provide its workers with a series of economic rights, first and foremost of which was the right to employment. Over the reform decade, the reformers launched countless criticisms against this manpower system, castigating it for fostering low labor productivity, inefficiency, and a lack of competition. Stressing the need to link wages to output and to provide enterprise managers with the power to fire poor workers, policymakers sought to incorporate features of a labor market into the Chinese system of labor allocation.

The rhetoric of the reformers, however, was never matched by a corresponding boldness in deeds. In part, this situation reflected the existence of widespread opposition, both among citizens and within the leadership, to attempts at labor reform. But the evidence also appears to indicate that the reformers themselves envisioned not so much a full dismantling as a partial restructuring of the system. In reality, the sorts of labor reforms promulgated prior to the government's crackdown in Tiananmen Square were highly circumscribed in their scope and impact.

***Efforts at employment reform.*** After years of experimentation, employment reform received legislative confirmation in July 1986 with the State Council's promulgation of four sets of regulations.[13] The most important of these were the "Provisional Regulations on the Implementation of Contracts in State-Run Enterprises," which established as a matter of state policy that workers recruited for regular jobs in state-run enterprises were to be hired on the basis of individually concluded contracts for a specified period, ranging from one to five years. Contract workers were to be treated as permanent workers in terms of pay, bonuses, and subsidies, but were to have less coverage than permanent workers in terms of unemployment compensation and related benefits. The contract would lay out conditions under which workers could be fired, laid off, or not rehired at the end of the contract period.

A second measure, the "Provisional Regulations Governing Hiring of Workers," sought to open state-enterprise recruitment to all qualified workers, thereby abolishing the *dingti* system. The "Provisional Regulations Governing Dismissal of Delinquent Employees" outlined the conditions under which an employee could be fired, while the "Provisional Regulations Concerning Insurance for Employees Awaiting Employment" provided for the payment of unemployment relief (and, in certain instances, retirement pensions) to workers who had lost their jobs as a consequence of bankruptcy, impending bankruptcy, termination of the labor contract, or dismissal. Unemployment benefits were tied to seniority and ranged from a minimum of 12 months' pay at 60 percent of standard earnings for low-seniority workers to 12 months' pay at 75 percent of standard earnings plus another 12 months' pay at 50 percent of standard earnings for workers employed by an enterprise for five or more years.

Heralded as a means of rationalizing the allocation of labor, the July 1986 measures constituted a step toward opening employment to the most qualified applicants while simultaneously increasing the discretionary power of enterprise managements to hire and fire workers contingent upon job performance. However, the 1986 regulations had limited impact, because of the modest scope of their jurisdiction and of a host of informal forces operating to impede labor mobility. First, the regulations pertained only to workers in the state sector of the economy. The regulations dealing with contract labor, moreover, applied only to *new* workers who had entered the labor force since 1986. The limited scope of the regulations clearly reflected compromises between policy-makers who sought to preserve the permanent employment system and those who wanted to place all employment on a contractual basis.[14]

By October 1988, state enterprises were reported to

[13]These four sets of regulations appeared in *Gongbao* (Beijing), Oct. 10, 1986. Translations can be found in *Legislative Series*, No. 2, 1987, Geneva, International Labor Organization. In China, "provisional" regulations have the force of law even though they are often replaced by "permanent" regulations at a later date.

[14]Gordon White, "The Politics of Economic Reform in Chinese Industry: The Introduction of the Labour Contract System," *The China Quarterly*, September 1987, p. 366.



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have employed 8.05 million contract workers, accounting for 8.3 percent of their total labor force.[15] Indications are, however, that the contract system met with resistance on the part of workers and managers alike, thus diluting its effectiveness. In many instances, enterprise managements have apparently treated contract workers no differently than permanent workers with lifelong job tenure; preliminary reports also indicate that it is almost as difficult to dismiss a contract worker upon the expiration of his or her contract as it is to dismiss a permanent worker.[16]

After a decade, the reformers appear not to have made much of a dent in altering the fundamental conception that it is the duty of a socialist state to make sure that no one is unemployed, at least within the urban sector of the economy. The 1986 regulations provided an institutional mandate for the release of workers, but they also demonstrated a continued commitment by the state not only to provide a safety net but also to arrange for alternative employment. Even workers dismissed for dereliction on the job had the right to be reassigned to another position.

Pervasive attitudes about job rights, moreover, were reinforced by a host of structural factors that operated to constrain the dismissal of labor. The failure of the reform movement to carry through a program of restructuring that would tie financial accountability to enterprise productivity—thus allowing for the continued existence of what the Hungarian economist János Kornai has labelled "soft budget constraints"—reduced the motivation of enterprise managers to trim their labor force.[17] Authorities were loath to impose bankruptcy,[18] and in Shenyang, city officials instead developed a "new formula" that sought to merge bankrupt firms with stable companies so as to protect workers from the fate of unemployment.[19]

The paternalistic role of the state was further indicated in its continued dominance over the process of labor allocation. Table 3 illustrates that in 1988, almost 90 percent of urban job seekers were still receiving work assignments from the state, in either the state or the collective sector. Only 10.5 percent of those listed as newly employed found work in the private sector of the economy.

The evidence suggests, however, that enterprise managers were not wholly immune to pressures to economize and that by the late 1980's, they were using their discretionary powers to make cost-cutting decisions about hiring, which had an effect on the composition of the labor force. First, it appears that state enterprises were hiring more temporary workers. Chinese sources rarely comment on the number of temporary workers in the labor force, but Hilary Josephs has estimated that temporary workers accounted for approximately 13 million people, or 13.5 percent of the total labor force in state enterprises in 1988, up from 8.8 million people, or 10.1 percent of the total state labor force in 1984.[20]

Second, enterprise managements began to display a widespread reluctance to hire women, citing, among other things, the extra costs associated with the payment of maternity benefits.[21] Chauvinistic attitudes, more candidly expressed than in the past, contributed to the conviction that men should have priority over women in hiring and were more deserving of placement in state-sector jobs, especially under conditions of labor surplus. By the mid-1980's, some in the leadership—including high-ranking cadres within the ACFTU—were suggesting that women should retire from the labor force to become full-time housewives, in order to a alleviate China's unemployment problem.[22] By the late 1980's, several steps had already been taken to reduce women's job security and benefits. Chinese enterprises lowered the job tenure of female employment by granting women up to seven years of maternity leave (usually remunerated at 70 percent of basic pay but without bonuses or subsidy payments) and encouraged women to retire from the labor force as early as at the age of 40.[23]

Women were acknowledged to constitute a majority—reportedly as high as 80 percent in some cities—of

[15]British Broadcasting Corporation, *Summary of World Broadcasts* (London–hereafter, *SWB*), FE/033 B2/3, Dec. 13, 1988.

[16]See Deborah Davis, "Chinese Social Welfare: Policies and Dilemmas," *The China Quarterly*, September 1989, pp. 577–97; William Bryd and Gene Tidrick, "Factor Allocation and Enterprise Incentives: China's Industrial Reform," in Gene Tidrick amd Chen Jiyuan, Eds., *China's Industrial Reform*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1987, p. 69; also see *SWB*, FE/0246 B2/4, Sept. 2, 1988.

[17]See János Kornai, "Resource-Constrained Versus Demand-Constrained Systems," *Econometrica* (Chicago), No. 4, 1979, pp. 801–19; and idem, *Economics of Shortage*, 2 vols., Amsterdam, North Holland, 1980.

[18]Nicholas D. Kristof, "Socialism Grasps a Stick: Bankruptcy in China," *The New York Times*, Mar. 7, 1989.

[19]Ibid.; *SWB*, FE/0002 B2/7, Nov. 5, 1988, and FE/0238 B2/9, Oct. 15, 1988. On bankruptcy and mergers, see also Dorothy J. Solinger, "Capitalist Measures with Chinese Characteristics," *Problems of Communism* (Washington, DC), January-February 1989, pp. 22–25.

[20]Hilary K. Josephs, "Labor Reform in the Workers' State: The Chinese Experience," *Journal of Chinese Law* (Lincoln, NB), Fall 1988, pp. 212, 255.

[21]See, for example, reports on the adverse financial consequences for Chinese enterprises associated with hiring female labor, *China Daily* (Beijing), Mar. 26, 1988, in *FBIS-CHI*, Mar. 30, 1988, p. 39; and *Xinhua*, Oct. 22, 1988, in ibid., Oct. 25, 1988, pp. 38–39.

[22]For a discussion of attempts in the 1950's to persuade women to retire from the labor force through the promotion of a "Housework Is Glorious" campaign, see Delia Davin, *Women Work: Women and the Party in Revolutionary China*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1979, pp. 110–11, and 170–73; and idem, "The Implications of Some Aspects of CCP Policy Toward Urban Women in the 1950's ," *Modern China* (Beverly Hills, CA), October 1975, pp. 369-371.



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those waiting for work, and they were also apparently more susceptible to layoffs. According to a 1987 ACFTU investigation of 660 state and collectively-owned enterprises, 62.5 percent of the workers dismissed were women, with the number ranging as high as 80 percent in some heavy industry enterprises.[24]

By the late 1980's, Chinese press reports were replete with examples of discriminatory treatment of women in hiring, e.g., a preference to hire less-qualified males than more-qualified females. Curiously, despite considerable public discussion of the problem, published statistics do not confirm an increase in discrimination against women in hiring, at least as of 1988. Until then, women were still depicted as constituting a rising percentage of the total labor force as well as a rising percentage of employees in the state sector of the economy.[25] It is this author's sense that the problem is intensifying and that the statistics are lagging somewhat behind the trend.

***Wage reform*** vs. ***egalitarianism.*** China's reformers sought to overcome the Maoist predilection for egalitarianism in wages. The goal was to increase income inequality as a means of providing just rewards for differential contributions of socially productive labor under conditions of scarcity. Ironically, the effort apparently led to an increase, rather than a decrease, in egalitarian methods of wage distribution in state enterprises. Even CCP General Secretary Jiang Zemin acknowledged this phenomenon in an article otherwise devoted to excessive income differentiation, which appeared in the July 1989 issue of the party theoretical journal *Qiushi*: "The problem of egalitarianism has not been settled. In fact, it is growing in certain sectors, particularly in state-run enterprises."[26]

Operating in an environment of incomplete fiscal reform and soft budget constraints, enterprises developed an incentive structure that relied more on the carrot than the stick, as reflected in the profusion of bonus payments and the maintenance of a highly subsidized system of employee benefits for permanent workers in state enterprises. Rather than use their increased financial authority for productive investment, enterprise managers tended to join forces with workers to wrest funds from the center for distribution to the labor force in a relatively egalitarian manner.[27]

From 1978 to 1988, the share of bonuses in the total wage bill rose from 2.3 percent to 17.2 percent, and the share of subsidies, from 6.5 percent to 21.4 percent for workers and staff in state enterprises.[28] The percentage of investment funds allocated to nonproductive projects jumped considerably with the loosening of financial accountability in state enterprises, rising from 20.9 percent of investment in capital construction in 1978 to 45.5 percent in 1982 before dropping to 33.1 percent in 1988; large outlays were directed toward housing construction.[29] Attempts to place a cap on the dispersal of bonuses often led to elaborate circumventions on the part of enterprise managements.[30]

Deeply embedded collectivist norms, moreover, impeded attempts to widen salary differentials. Bonuses tended to be paid out on a relatively equal basis, and worker opposition helped limit efforts to reintroduce piece-work, which had been vilified during the Cultural Revolution era. In 1988, piece rates constituted 9.4 percent of the total wage bill in state enterprises.[31]

***Extending the reach of labor policy.*** Despite the limited impact of reform on patterns of employment and distribution within state or large-scale collective enterprises, reform measures did contribute significantly to the transformation of economic relationships in other sectors of the economy. This is seen in the growth in small-scale collectively-owned units, the proliferation of rural enterprises, and the development of private forms of labor activity. In these areas of the economy,

[23]See *Jingji ribao* (Beijing), Aug. 24, 1988, in Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *JPRS Report: China* (Washington, DC—hereafter, *JPRS-CAR*), Oct. 5, 1988, pp. 31–32; *Xinhua*, Oct. 22, 1988, in *FBIS-CHI*, Oct. 25, 1988, pp. 38–39; *China Daily*, Mar. 18, 1989, in *JPRS-CAR*, Apr. 18, 1989, p. 29; and *Xinhua*, Oct. 23, 1989, in *FBIS-CHI*, Oct. 24, 1989, p. 34.

[24]*China Daily*, Mar. 18, 1989. The trade union survey revealed that only 5.3 percent of enterprise managers expressed a willingness to hire women for jobs that could be performed by either sex. Even in the textile industry, where women have traditionally constituted a majority of the work force, 75 percent of the managers questioned indicated a preference for male labor. See also *FBIS-CHI*, Sept. 7, 1988, pp. 31–32; *Xinhua*, Mar. 10, 1989, in ibid., Mar. 14, 1989, pp. 55–56; and *SWB*, FE/0617 B2/4, Nov. 18, 1989.

[25]In 1988, women comprised 37.0 percent of the total employed; the percentage of women employed in the state sector rose from 31.5 percent in 1981 to 33.4 percent in 1988, at a time when the share of state sector employment in the national labor force was in decline (seeTable 3). See *Zhongguo tongji nianjian, 1989*, pp. 101, 122; *People's Republic of China Yearbook, 1984*, Beijing, Xinhua Publishing House, 1984, p. 758.

[26]Jiang Zemin, "Diligently Abolish the Phenomenon of Unfair Distribution in Society," *Qiushi* (Beijing), June 16, 1989, p. 5. Although Jiang devoted most of his attention to the problem of increasing income disparity between those on state salary and those outside the state sector, he clearly also targeted his remarks at the "stubborn disease of egalitarianism" within the state sector.

[27]Andrew G. Walder, "Factory and Manager in an Era of Reform," *The China Quarterly*, June 1989, pp. 242–64; also idem, "The Informal Dimension of Enterprise Financial Reforms," in US Congress, Joint Economic Committee, *China's Economy Looks to the Year 2000*, Vol. 2., Washington, DC, US Government Printing Office, pp. 630–45.

[28]*Zhongguo tongji nianjian, 1989*, p. 130.

[29]*China Statistical Abstract, 1989*, Westport, CT, Praeger, 1989, p. 61.

[30]See, for example, Thomas T. Wong, "The Salary Structure, Allowances and Benefits of a Shanghai Electronics Factory," *The China Quarterly*, March 1989, pp. 140–41.

[31]*Zhongguo tongji nianjian, 1989*, p. 130.



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which tended to operate according to the dictates of market forces, bankruptcies were an everyday occurrence, job security was minimal, unemployment compensation benefits were typically nonexistent, and working conditions were often appalling.

The dualistic division of the labor force, as the research of Andrew Walder has demonstrated, was not new, but the effect of the reforms was to create an increasingly differentiated employment structure in the PRC, which placed a larger proportion of the labor force outside of the direct purview of the state.[32] Moreover, in contrast to the laissez-faire approach to these issues in the Maoist era, the post-1978 leadership —while also concentrating on effecting changes in the dominant state sector—displayed a greater attention to developing a comprehensive system of labor administration that would set policy on a national basis and extend the scope of labor legislation. The construction of such a system was still in the planning stages at the time of the Tiananmen debacle, but its basic features, sketched in broad outline, are readily discernible.

Chinese reformers envisioned the establishment of a unified system of social security benefits that would have shifted responsibility from the enterprise to the state, with lowered levels of coverage but extension of coverage to those outside of the state and large-scale collective enterprises (even so, it was candidly acknowledged that inequities in the levels of remuneration would exist).[33] For example, the "Provisional Regulations Governing Private Enterprises in the PRC," issued in June 1988, specified that private enterprises enroll their staff and workers in social insurance programs "when conditions apply."[34] By the late 1980's, a series of experimental schemes, primarily in the area of pension reform, had been set up. These typically required enterprises to make contributions to a fund administered by local labor insurance departments. Such procedures, if actually implemented, promised as well to alleviate the financial burden of enterprises that hired a large percentage of women or anticipated having a rising numbers of retirees, while curbing the consumptionist tendencies of other enterprises by stripping them of control over the allocation of welfare funds.[35] In December 1988, Minister of Labor Luo Gan announced the goal of establishing within five years the basic framework of a renovated social insurance system providing for medical care, retirement pensions, and unemployment benefits "compatible with the level of the productive forces and the state of coexistence of various ownership systems."[36]

*A teenager dips Christmas candles at a factory in southern China in 1988.*

**—AP/Wide World Photos.**

Second, having presided over the explosive growth of sectors of the economy driven by the operation of market forces, the reformers were confronted by issues pertaining to workers' rights that were more easily evaded by the Maoist regime. There seems little doubt that the marketizing impetus of the reforms contributed to an increase in practices injurious to workers, as reflected in an increase in industrial accidents, a rise in the employment of child labor, and excessive demands that employees work long overtime hours. Institution of the economic responsibility system in the 1980's led enterprises to emphasize production and profit targets over work safety.[37]

The worst working conditions to be found were in China's rural enterprises, where safety precautions

[32]See Walder, "Communist Neo-Traditionalism, and 'The Remaking of the Chinese Working Class: 1949–1981'," *Modern China*, January 1984, pp. 3–48.

[33]It was estimated in 1986 that approximately 80 million workers in state enterprises and 20 million workers in large collective enterprises received the welfare benefits provided under the 1954 labor insurance regulations; if so, this left excluded from participation in the social welfare system some 13 million workers in the state sector and about 14 million workers in the collective sector, in addition to the workers in private and villlage and township enterprises. See "Social Security Reforms," *Social and Labour Bulletin 1987*, Geneva, International Labour Organization, pp. 154–55.

[34]*Xinhua*, June 28, 1988 in *SWB*, FE W/0037 C/1, Aug. 3, 1988.

[35]For reports on efforts and policy recommendations to centralize the administration of maternity benefits, see *China Daily*, Mar. 26, 1988, p. 3; and *Xinhua*, Sept. 16, 1989, in *FBIS-CHI*, Sept. 27, 1989, p. 29.

[36]*SWB*, FE/0333 B2/4, Dec. 13, 1988.

[37]*Xinhua*, Mar. 26, 1986, in *FBIS-CHI*, Apr. 1, 1986, p. K/27; *FBIS-CHI*, Dec. 7, 1988, p. 46; and *Beijing Review*, July 17–23, 1989, pp. 23–24.



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were often wholly absent. This was especially the case in the coal mining industry, where coal supply shortages spurred the establishment of thousands of rural mines operated by townships or private entrepreneurs. By 1988, rural mines accounted for 35 percent of national output, but safety standards and productive techniques in these mines were reported to resemble those of 18th-century England. Estimates were that six times as many miners were killed in accidents in township mines as in state-owned mines.[38]

The increased commercialization of the Chinese economy also led to an increase in the employment of workers under the age of 16. This phenomenon was particularly prevalent in coastal regions and Special Economic Zones, and in township enterprises, private businesses, and the shops of self-employed entrepreneurs in the countryside. In some township enterprises, children were reported in 1988 to constitute 20 percent of the total number of employees.[39] Indications were, moreover, that the majority of under-age employees were girls.[40] These same township and private enterprises were also more likely to compel employees to work extended hours, as were enterprises that were based on foreign investment, particularly funds supplied from Hong Kong, Macau, or overseas Chinese. There were cases chronicled of workers forced to remain at their jobs for up to 24 hours at a stretch.

To its credit, the Chinese leadership elected not to write off workers in the secondary sectors of the economy as unfortunate but unavoidable casualties of the process of industrialization. Rather, the leadership—in response to presure from an increasingly emboldened press, which was engaging in Western-style investigative journalism and reporting cases of labor abuse—opted to condemn such practices as infringements of workers' rights.

The vigor of the regime's response should not be overestimated; Chinese policy-makers essentially sought to deal with evidence of abuses in the workplace through the enactment of regulations, an approach that was largely piecemeal and reactive rather than initiatory. More important, the state had only limited ability to enforce regulations and ensure compliance at the local level. Nonetheless, the efforts by China's leadership to institutionalize protective labor regulations seem to have been guided by a vision founded on the assumption that the leadership had certain responsibilities for the workers' welfare under socialism.

A series of regulations extended the scope of state involvement beyond its traditional focus on the state sector of the economy. "Provisional Regulations for Trade Union Safety Inspectors" were promulgated in 1985, followed in 1987 by "Provisions for Strengthening Labor Protection in Village and Township Enterprises." Following reentry into the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 1983, China also emerged as a leading spokesperson within that forum for the development of labor standards appropriate to workers in small and medium-sized enterprises.[41] In April 1989, Beijing was the site of an ILO symposium on labor protection, working conditions, and trade unions.

The 1986 "Provisional Regulations on Hiring," the 1987 "Provisions for Strengthening Labor Protection Work," and various edicts on hiring in the Special Economic Zones unequivocally set the age limit for employment at 16. Beginning in the late 1980's, the Chinese government began to issue a series of circulars prohibiting the employment of under-age labor for all units and individuals throughout the country. The most recent of these, issued in November 1988, provided for stiff fines and the eventual closure of enterprises found in violation of the law.[42] In 1988, the "Provisional Regulations Governing Private Enterprises in the PRC" attempted to set standards for work in private enterprises. The regulations mandated a 16-year age minimum for hiring, an eight-hour workday, the adoption of state regulations on labor protection, and, as noted above, the institution of social welfare benefits when applicable.

These regulations, however, were essentially stopgap measures; their passage bore testimony to the lack of a comprehensive labor law in the PRC. As ACFTU Vice-Chairperson Zhang Ruiyang noted in frustration in 1987, application of sanctions against enterprises that made egregious use of overtime was almost impossible since such practices were not technically illegal.[43] Work on preparing a codified labor law had begun in the 1950's but was abandoned upon the triumph of Maoist over Soviet-derived values. The proposal was resurrected by Deng Xiaoping in 1979, and the Ministry of Labor was ordered to begin work on the compilation

[38]*South China Morning Post* (Hong Kong), June 22, 1989, in *FBIS-CHI*, June 22, 1988, pp. 33–34; and *FBIS-CHI*, Aug. 7, 1989, p. 51. The death rate in private mines was apparently even higher; according to the Ministry of Energy, 17 miners died for every million tons of coal mined in private mines compared with 2.3 miners who were estimated to die for every million tons of coal mined in state-owned mines.

[39]*China Daily*, Nov. 5, 1988; also *FBIS-CHI*, Mar. 14, 1989, pp. 55–56.

[40]See *Qiushi*, No. 11, Dec. 1, 1988, pp. 32–36; and *Xinhua*, Mar. 4, 1988, in *FBIS-CHI*, Mar. 7, 1988, p. 69.

[41]See Sha Ye's speech on the topic in *Proceedings of the International Labour Organization*, 72nd Session, Geneva, ILO, 1986.

[42]*China Daily*, Nov. 5, 1988.

[43]*Gongren ribao* (Beijing) Mar.4, 1987.



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of a set of labor laws. Ten years later, the law was still in the drafting stages, the apparent victim of a highly politicized jurisdictional dispute among different bureaucratic interests.

***Increasing the workers' voice.*** Beginning in 1978, Chinese reformers embarked on a simultaneous quest to establish and strengthen institutional structures charged with the task of representing workers' rights and demands and to expand the participatory role of staff and workers within the enterprise. These were part of a more general effort to introduce more pluralism into Chinese decision-making. In his keynote address at the Ninth Congress of a revived ACFTU in 1978, Deng Xiaoping singled out enterprise democratization as a central component of Chinese labor policy.[44] Subsequently, attempts were made to institute enterprise elections, to resurrect the system of workers' congresses as representative meetings of enterprise staff and workers, and to redefine the role of the trade union organizations to allow them greater operational autonomy in order to cater to the needs of the workers. The Chinese pursuit of enterprise democratization, however, appears to have viewed democracy more as a pragmatic means of attaining reform goals—including shoring up regime legitimacy and increasing productive efficiency—than as an end in itself.

***The trade unions.*** Beginning at its Ninth Congress, the ACFTU began to reassess its operations in the Maoist era, and to rehabilitate leaders of the 1950's, such as Li Lisan and Lai Ruoyu, who had been purged for "economist" and "syndicalist" errors. In the revised scheme of things, the trade union's first responsibility was no longer to focus on production but to promote the welfare of the workers, a task which, it was recognized, required a certain degree of independence from the party. This shift gained impetus from events unfolding in Poland in 1980 with the birth and later the legalization of Solidarity as an independent trade union. In an October 1980 report, Liao Gailong, a staff member of the Policy Studies Office of the Central Committee (and a close, if more liberal, associate of Deng Xiaoping), made the connection explicit:

*We all know what happened in Poland. If we do not change our course, the same things will happen to us. Will the working class not rise in rebellion? Therefore, our trade unions and mass organizations must be thoroughly reformed, and the masses of workers must be allowed freedom and democracy in electing their own trade union leaders and officials of the leading bodies, so that the masses of workers will be able to form their own trade unions.*[45]

Subsequent trade union policy failed to live up to the high hopes expressed by reformers in the fall of 1980. This was a consequence of the ongoing political struggle between reformist and more conservative factions within the leadership. The Central Committee Work Conference in December 1980 issued a set of instructions on trade union work that made it clear that the sanctioning of a greater operational independence for the unions did not in any way indicate a dissolution of ties binding the unions to the party. This was a severe blow to the reformists and set the tone for the development of labor policy in the 1980's.

Hard-liners and reformers alike were concerned by the outbreak of strikes and labor unrest in China in 1980–81. According to diplomatic sources in Beijing, there were 20–30 demonstrations and strikes in autumn 1980.[46] Labor unrest in the industrial cities of Wuhan and Taiyuan culminated in attempts to establish independent trade unions as the Poles had done.[47] Deng Xiaoping, in good dialectical fashion adhering to goals of economic reform even while maintaining an ideological orthodoxy in political matters, stressed maintenance of party control lest the Polish situation repeat itself in China.[48] Reformers like Liao Gailong took the view that increased liberalization and expression of worker interests within the system was preferable to driving the workers to devise alternative structures outside of the system.

By 1983, reformist elements within the Chinese leadership had managed to weather the ideological on-

[44] *Zhongguo gonghui dijiuci quanguo daibiao dahui zhuyao wenjan* (Principal Documents of the Ninth Congress of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions), Beijing, Gongren chubanshe, 1978, p. 4.

[45] *Ch'ishih nientai* (Hong Kong), March 1981, in *FBIS-CHI*, Mar. 15, 1981, p. U/11. On Liao Gailong's relationship to Deng Xiaoping, see Andrew J. Nathan, "Chinese Democracy in 1989: Continuity and Change," *Problems of Communism*, September-October 1989, p. 18.

[46] *The New York Times*, Apr. 14, 1981.

[47] For a discussion of strikes in Wuhan, see ibid., Jan. 30, 1981; *The Guardian* (Manchester), Jan. 30, 1981; AFP in *FBIS-CHI*, Feb. 20, 1981, p. H/I; and AFP in *FBIS-CHI*, Jan. 29, 1981, p. P/1. For a discussion of strikes in Taiyuan, see AFP in *FBIS-CHI*, Mar. 3, 1981, p. R/I; *The New York Times*, Mar. 5, 1981, p. 8; and *The Washington Post*, April 30, 1981. Reports of other strikes in the PRC are noted in *SWB*, FE/6715 B11/4-6, May 5, 1981; *The Christian Science Monitor* (Boston, MA), Feb. 24, 1981; *The Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 1, 1981; and *China Daily*, Oct. 8, 1981, in *FBIS-CHI*, Oct. 9, 1981, p. Q/1.

[48] In July 1981, for example, Deng Xiaoping noted: "There is a complicated social and historical background to the Polish issue. We have to draw lessons from it. One of the lessons is that we must maintain party leadership and the socialist system." Quoted in Ryosei Kokubun, "The Politics of Foreign Economic Policy-Making in China: The Case of Plant Cancellations," *The China Quarterly*, March 1986, p. 30.



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slaught of the "spiritual pollution" campaign and to gain the upper hand in the formation of trade union policy. The revised trade union constitution, unveiled at the 10th ACFTU Congress that year, noted for the first time the importance of independence in trade union work.[49] Although the clause guaranteeing the right to strike had been removed from the Chinese constitution in 1982, an action evidently taken in response to the Polish crisis, Chinese trade union leaders began to indicate that the ACFTU could legitimately support strikes and even initiate them under certain limited conditions.[50] Adopting the rather disingenuous position that the lack of a constitutional guarantee to strike should not be taken to indicate that strikes in China were prohibited nor that all strikes were illegal, ACFTU Executive Committee member Wang Jiachong noted on the eve of the 10th ACFTU Congress that Chinese unions could support strikes in exceptional cases, such as those involving industrial safety.[51] This theme was amplified by ACFTU Chairman Ni Zhifu in an interview in early 1984, in which he specified that the responsibility for organizing such a strike would rest with the unions, a position that received formal sanction later that year in a trade union resolution stating that "trade unions should support workers in exercising their rights to boycott those who direct production in violation of regulations."[52]

Moreover, many of the regulations promulgated after 1978 were crafted with the aim of increasing the trade union's institutional role in the enterprise. Regulations on workers' congresses, adopted in 1986 (see below), as had the provisional regulations of 1981, identified the unions as the organizational force behind the establishment of representative congresses of staff and workers; the 1986 "Provisional Regulations on the Dismissal of Delinquent Employees" required the consent of the trade union before dismissing a worker; the 1987 "Provisional Rules on Handling Labor Disputes" specified that trade union representatives should sit on enterprise mediation committees and on local arbitration committees set up to resolve labor disputes; and the 1988 "Law on the State-Owned Industrial Enterprise" reaffirmed the obligation of the trade union to represent the interests of staff and workers and to "conduct its work independently according to law."[53]

The end goal of trade union reform appeared to have been the transformation of the unions into genuine interest groups with influence in the elaboration of policy at both the national and local levels. Such a scenario was outlined, for example, by ACFTU Chairman Ni Zhifu at the 11th ACFTU Congress in October 1988, in his proposal that trade unions play a role in the enactment of legislation pertaining to the interests of workers, for example, laws covering minimum wages, working hours, employment protection, and social welfare and unemployment benefits.[54]

By the time of the 11th ACFTU Congress, however, it was evident that the most basic goals of trade union policy had not been met during a decade of reform, that the unions had not managed to free themselves from a slavish subservience to the party, and that aspects of reform policy—in particular, the devolution of decision-making powers to the enterprise management—had unintended adverse repercussions for the unions. In spring 1988, Ni Zhifu candidly acknowledged the inability of the unions to counter worker alienation:

*Our trade union is more like a "government-run organization," which has seldom played an independent role in organizing activities representing its special features as a mass organization, since it has long been affected and fettered by the party's "centralized leadership," an administrative structure characterized by overcentralization of power, and undue emphasis on keeping trade union operations in line with social interests. Meanwhile . . . the trade union has failed to safeguard more effectively the workers' legitimate rights in the economic and political fields, to give fuller play to the initiative of the vast numbers of workers in socialist construction by mobilizing and uniting them . . . .*[55]

This disappointing trade union performance was a reflection of the constraints imposed both from above and from below. The Chinese leadership's concern that the unions possessed the theoretical, if highly unlikely,

[49]*Zhongguo gonghui dishici quanguo daibiao dahui zhuyao wenjan* (Principal Documents of the 10th Congress of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions), Beijing, Gongren chubanshe, 1983, p. 51.

[50]The freedom-to-strike clause was ignored in the midst of a criticism movement that culminated in 1980 with the eradication of the "four big freedoms" (the right of citizens to speak out freely, to air their views fully, to hold great debates, and to write big-character posters) from the Chinese constitution. The freedom to strike did not come under attack until after the founding of Solidarity. On the latter issue, see Xinhua, Aug. 26, 1982, in *SWB*, FE/7661 B/11/1, Aug. 28, 1982; *Ch'ishih nientai*, No. 6, 1982, p. 62, in Joint Publications Research Service, *China Report: Political, Sociological, and Military Affairs* (Washington, DC), No. 81777, Sept. 15, 1982, pp. 122–24; and Harry Harding, op. cit., p. 182.

[51]*FBIS-CHI*, Feb. 20, 1983, pp. K/9–10. Also see Publications Research Service, *China Report: Economics* (Washington, DC—hereafter, *JPRS-CEA*), No. 84762, Nov. 16, 1983, pp. 48-49; and *The New York Times*, Oct. 24, 1983.

[52]*Zhongbao* (New York), Feb. 20, 1984; and *JPRS-CEA*, No. 85-008, Jan. 26, 1985, p. 123.

[53]*FBIS-CHI*, Apr. 26, 1988, p. 43.

[54]*Gongren ribao*, Oct. 30, 1988.

[55]*Liaowang* (Beijing), Overseas edition, Apr. 25, 1988, trans. in *FBIS-CHI*, May 6, 1988, p. 21.



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capability to realize a nationwide mobilization of workers was evident in the issuance of ACFTU regulations in 1984 specifying that "national, transregional, and transindustrial mass activities should by all means be discouraged."[56] Similarly, a reluctance to grant increased powers to the unions apparently contributed to the bureaucratic deadlock that stalled the promulgation of a new trade union law. The law, envisioned as a replacement of the 1950 law on trade unions, which by the 1980's had become hopelessly out of date, sought to incorporate a substantially enhanced role for the unions in the administration and initiation of social welfare policy. This ensured the opposition of a coalition of enterprise managers and ministerial officials, who, fearing a diminution of their own authority, charged that the law would have the effect of making the unions too powerful. Ten years in the drafting, the Trade Union Law was reported to have undergone no fewer than 100 amendments by 1988, reflecting the strength of objections raised over the years.[57] Attempts to place the law on the agenda of the National People's Congress in spring 1989, an action that reportedly owed "much to the fact that the government had drawn lessons from the current trade union movements in Poland and other socialist countries," were derailed by the violent official reaction to the pro-democracy movement.[58]

But whatever the trials of reform-oriented cadres in the top echelons of the ACFTU, they functioned in a more hospitable environment than their counterparts positioned at the local level, within the enterprises. Critiques of union performance that had emerged by the late 1980's quite correctly focused on the failure to implement policy at the grass-roots level. For all the injunctions that the trade unions should assume an independent operational existence, the maintenance of traditional authority relationships within the enterprises continued to place the unions in a position of servile dependence on the enterprise management, or rather, on the enterprise party committee. Interlocking directorates worked to ensure that a member of the enterprise party committee (often also the assistant factory manager) served on the enterprise trade union committee, typically as its chairman.[59] The party, moreover, largely continued to exercise its traditional prerogative to make personnel appointments within the trade union apparatus and to dictate the content of trade union policy.

Decentralization of authority to enterprise managers under the reform process, moreover, left enterprise unions highly vulnerable to managerial dictates and lessened union capacity to establish vertical ties within the ACFTU. To put it baldly, enterprise managers often saw the unions as eminently dispensable structures with little functional utility for the enterprise. Faced with the task of administrative streamlining, managers began to use the unions as a sort of repository for surplus cadres unwanted elsewhere in the system—often the aged and the technically incompetent—or, conversely, to transfer competent union cadres to other administrative duties within the enterprise, either permanently or temporarily. It was not unknown for managers to use their newly expanded prerogatives to eliminate the enterprise trade union entirely as an administrative entity and merge its duties with other administrative departments and transfer its trade union cadres to other posts. By the mid-1980's, the trade union press was replete with examples of this sort of behavior, which increasingly engaged the direct attention of union leaders.[60] By most counts, China's unions fared poorly even in comparison with unions in other socialist societies that were not known as paragons of pluralist expression.[61]

***Workers' congresses and enterprise elections.*** Efforts at enterprise democratization largely concentrated on expanding the role of the unions to include serving as a representative voice for the workers, but there were also experiments with the election of enterprise managements and the establishment of elected workers' congresses. The workers' congresses were not new to the Chinese enterprise, but rather constituted a revival of structures established after 1949. Primarily constituted as representative meetings of elected staff and workers at the enterprise level (depending on size, workshops could establish their own congress), the congresses were conceived of by the reformers as a fundamental means of incorporating staff and workers directly into genuine participation in enterprise decision-making. This approach, which received prominent

[56]*Xinhua,* Dec. 27, 1984, trans. in *JPRS-CEA,* No. 85-008, Jan. 26, 1985, p. 123.

[57]*FBIS-CHI,* Oct. 31, 1988, p. 31.

[58]The quote is from Chen Yu, chairman of the ACFTU's law advisory committee. See *FBIS-CHI,* Mar. 6, 1989, p. 32.

[59]See, for example, the articles criticizing this practice in *Gongren ribao,* Apr. 13, 1988.

[60]See, for example, Ni Zhifu, in *Renmin ribao,* Apr. 30, 1988; *Gongren ribao,* Feb. 20 and Apr. 18, 1988; and letters to the editor in *Gongren ribao,* Apr. 13, 1988. For specific comments made at the 11th ACFTU Congress, see the editorial on the opening of the congress in *Renmin ribao,* Oct. 22, 1988; and Ni Zhifu's Work Report in *Gongren ribao,* Oct. 30, 1988.

[61]See the comments by David Granick comparing Chinese and Soviet trade union performance in *Chinese State Enterprises: A Property Rights Analysis,* Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1990, p. 238. For further information on unions in the Soviet Union and other socialist states, see Blair Ruble, *Soviet Trade Unions,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981; and Blair Ruble and Alex Pravda, Eds., *Trade Unions in Communist States,* Boston, Allen and Unwin, 1986.



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play in *Renmin ribao* and Chinese economic journals in the latter half of 1980, envisioned a tripartite division of powers in the enterprise among the party, the management, and the elected workers' congress. In their most liberal incarnation, these reform proposals suggested that the workers' congresses replace the party as the repository of policy authority over enterprise operations, that the management restrict itself to control of day-to-day operations, and that the party retire to the second line, from where it would continue to exercise a supervisory authority but would primarily focus on political and ideological work.[62] Such a system was actually adopted at selected keypoint enterprises on an experimental basis during 1980.[63]

The proposal that the workers' congresses assume policy authority over enterprise operations differed both from the Maoist practice of party control and the Soviet-style practice of managerial control. It most likely was inspired by the Yugoslav model of self-management.[64] Proponents of the approach, however, appeared to have had a limited interest in worker participation for its own sake; the appeal of the format lay in the curbs that it set on the party. As such, the proposal was destined not to survive the political shift toward ideological conservatism at the December 1980 Central Committee Work Conference. The "Provisional Regulations Concerning Congresses of Workers and Staff Members in State-Owned Industrial Enterprises," promulgated in June 1981, by and large provided for the reconstitution of the workers' congresses in their pre–Cultural Revolution format; they definitely were to be subject to the authority of the enterprise party committee. These regulations were superseded in 1986 by the permanent "Regulations on Workers' Congresses of State-Run Industrial Enterprises," which did not, however, involve any substantive changes.

According to the regulations, the workers' congresses are to meet twice a year, typically as bodies composed of elected representatives of staff and workers. Two key functions of the congresses are to conduct investigations into enterprise operations and to exercise supervision over the enterprise management. Over the course of the 1980's, the workers' congresses often were identified as the appropriate body to deal with such questions as allocation of housing and distribution of social insurance benefits within the enterprise. Although the regulations only mandated that workers' congresses be established in state-owned *industrial* enterprises, all state enterprises were enjoined to form their own workers' congresses, as were collective enterprises. At the end of 1988, some 382,000 enterprises were reported to have established workers' congresses. Such bodies were almost universal among state-owned industrial enterprises and the norm in large state-owned enterprises outside the industrial sector.[65]

As a matter of practical application, however, the capacity of the workers' congresses to function as a forum of worker participation was highly circumscribed. Although granted extensive authority on paper, the congresses were, on closer examination, essentially powerless structures with the ability to pass resolutions but not to implement them. As with the unions, the enterprise party committee played a central role in orchestrating workers' congress proceedings, from the automatic placement of a member of the enterprise party committee on the congress's presidium, to the selection of delegates to fill electoral slates as representatives, to the setting of the congress agendas.

These same mechanisms of control also served to ensure that the party retained control over experiments conducted after 1978 at some enterprises in electing managers and other administrative cadres, as a component of enterprise democratization. By 1988, some 10 percent of enterprises were said to be practicing a system of electing administrators to their posts.[66]

At the same time, the trade unions also began to experiment with elections that afforded a modicum of choice. At the 11th ACFTU Congress, in 1988, members of the Executive Committee of the ACFTU were elected for the first time from a slate of candidates (240 in all) that was larger than the number of seats to be filled (229).

Reform enthusiasm for the institution of elections seems to have peaked in the early 1980's and to have received declining attention in the later years of the decade. By the mid-1980's, it appeared that many enterprises that had originally conducted elections to their management had abandoned the practice, while in other enterprises, the elections were an empty ritual devoid of genuine choice.[67] A similar fate also befell many of the workers' congresses, as reform advocates shift-

[62]See, for example, Tian Fang et al., *Jingji yanjiu* (Beijing), No. 3, 1981, pp. 28–35; *Jingji guanli* (Beijing), No. 4, 1981, pp. 42–44; Ma Hong, *Renmin ribao*, Nov. 20, 1980; Jiang Yiwei, *Jingji guanli*, No. 11, 1980, pp. 14–22; and Wang Mengkui, *Jingji yanjiu*, No. 1, 1981, pp. 37–44.

[63]See *Jingji quanli*, No. 4, 1981, pp. 42–44; *Renmin ribao*, Nov. 20, 1980; and Tian Fang et al., loc. cit.

[64]For a discussion of the influence of the Yugoslav model on Chinese reformers, see Nina Halpern, "Learning from Abroad: Chinese Views of the East European Economic Experience, January 1977–June 1981," *Modern China*, January 1985, pp. 77–109. For illustrations of Chinese interest in the Yugoslav system, see Meng Yunjeng, *Jingji yanjiu*, No. 12, 1978, pp. 53–59; and Pang Chuan, *Jingji guanli*, No. 7, 1980, pp. 13–18.

[65]*Almanac of China's Economy. 1989*, Beijing, Jingji guanli chubanshe, 1989, p. Y-320.

[66]*People's Republic of China Yearbook, 1988*, Beijing, Xinhua Publishing House, 1988, p. 148.

[67]See David Granick, op. cit. p. 240.



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ed their predominant attention to the task of reviving the trade unions.[68]

## Worker Grievances and the Pro-Democracy Movement

What brought Beijing's workers to participate in the 1989 pro-democracy movement? On the whole, students did not appear to share the same political agenda with workers, who typically expressed less interest in abstract political ideals than in the economic struggles of everyday life. Both, however, seemed to be united in a common rage against the corruption rampant in China's ruling party. The question of what precise combination of factors propelled the workers into action is complex, but dissatisfaction with economic conditions appears to have been their key grievance.

At first glance, a decade of reform seemed to have brought a new prosperity to China's workers. They had higher incomes and the ability to purchase food items and consumer goods previously unavailable for mass consumption. This phenomenon seemed to validate Deng Xiaoping's formula for basing legitimacy on meeting consumer aspirations and tended to obscure the tensions engendered by reforms. It did, however, give rise to a revolution of rising expectations, and by the late 1980's, cracks which could not be easily patched up had begun to form in the reform edifice. In short, China's urban workers began to experience some of the adverse effects characteristic of the difficult transition from a static centrally-managed supply-driven economy to a reliance on market mechanisms —for example, high levels of corruption, widening income differentials among various social groups, and chronic price inflation.

Although egalitarian methods of wage distribution remained entrenched in sectors of the economy under the direct or indirect supervision of the state plan, i.e., in the state and collective enterprises,[69] the reform movement did effect other changes in the traditional system of distribution in China that challenged deep-seated assumptions about status hierarchies and the relationship between occupational groups. Urban dwellers expressed resentment and jealousy regarding the increased prosperity of peasants, especially those living in the suburbs of the cities.[70] The reforms also spurred the growth of new occupational groups in China which, although small in number, often were able to earn far higher wages than workers in the state enterprises. Tales of private entrepreneurs earning tens of thousands of yuan a year and more were common and contrasted sharply with the 1988 average annual wage of 1,747 yuan for salaried staff and workers.[71] In Shanghai, for example, the average annual income of private entrepreneurs was estimated to be over 5,000 yuan a year in 1988, with 10 percent earning over 10,000 yuan on a yearly basis.[72] By the end of the 1980's, the wage differentials between similar jobs were often considerable: for example, bus drivers (in the state sector) were reported to be earning one-tenth the income of taxi cab drivers (operating in the private sector).[73]

The promise of higher-paying jobs sparked an exodus out of the public sector—e.g., teachers became waiters—but it also led to widespread resentment over perceived inequities in distribution, especially among intellectuals, whose salaries lagged behind those of persons engaged in manual labor. Efforts by the state to place a cap on wage differentials by legislative means were largely unsuccessful, and income disparities between owners and employers in the private sector were increasing with a rise in the scale of production.[74] Thus the emergence of forms of a commodity economy began to have a destabilizing effect on the traditional distribution system without, however, giving rise to fundamental changes within the system itself.

Discontent over widening wage differentials was compounded by the emergence, since 1985, of an accelerating price inflation. The inflation rate was calculated at 18.5 percent in 1988 and 27.5 percent in the first quarter of 1989, although unofficial estimates ran considerably higher.[75] Subsidies provided by the state to offset price rises were not sufficient to prevent a decline in the standard of living for many urban dwellers. According to Wang Houde, a vice-chairman of the ACFTU, more than 50 percent of urban families may

[68]In autumn 1988, *Gongren ribao* printed a number of letters that pointed out in graphic detail the inadequacies of the performance of the workers' congresss at the grass-roots level.

[69]Not only was there a narrowing of differentials in the state sector in the latter part of the period, but differentials in wage levels between the state and collective sectors remained relatively constant, with the latter at 78.6 percent of the former in 1978 and 77 percent in 1988. These figures are derived from *Zhongguo tongji nianjian, 1989*, pp. 138, 149. The average annual wage of workers in units of joint ownership was 29 percent higher than that for workers in state enterprises in 1988.

[70]See Walder, "The Political Sociology . . . ," p. 34.

[71]This figure is an average based on average annual wages in the state, collective, and joint-ownership sectors of the economy. See *Zhongguo tongji nianjian, 1989*, p. 138.

[72]Jiang Zemin, loc. cit., p. 6.

[73]*Gongren ribao*, July 8, 1988.

[74]For a discussion of wage differentials in the private sector, see *Jingji cankao* (Beijing), Nov. 14, 1988, trans. in *FBIS-CHI*, Dec. 7, 1988, pp. 32–36.

[75]AFP, Feb. 3, 1989, in *FBIS-CHI*, Feb. 4, 1989, p. 47; and *The New York Times*, June 14, 1989.



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have suffered a decline in real income in 1988, with an estimated 25–30 percent of workers in China existing on a subsistence level.[76] The inflationary spiral of prices in China seems to have exacerbated antagonisms and the sense of relative deprivation over widening differentials in incomes felt by those at the lower end of the earnings scale. Concern over wage disparities increased as wages peaked and then began to decline, and as enterprises had to cut back on once nearly automatic bonuses.

Although inflation in China was modest compared to that found elsewhere in the Third World, China's workers had become accustomed to decades of price stability, which had long been touted as one of the advantages of the socialist system. In China, as was the case elsewhere within the communist world, rising prices threatened the implicit social contract between the state and its working class, under which workers supported the regime in return for guarantees of economic security. Similarly, Chinese urban dwellers, conditioned to view the right to employment as a near-sacred tenet of socialism, reacted with hostility to the state's announcement in spring 1989 that it would only be able to provide jobs for half of the 10 million people seeking work that year.[77]

When Chinese workers could find no institutional outlet for their grievances, the failure of China's efforts at democratization became apparent. Although China's leaders had envisioned enterprise democratization as a means of increasing the workers' sense of identification with the system, the inability of either the workers' congresses or the trade unions to act as a forum for the expression of workers' interests doubtless contributed to the workers' sense of alienation from the regime.

At the same time, as a result of the reforms, a small but growing number of urban dwellers working in the private sector of the economy found themselves in the hitherto anomalous position of being urban residents without a workplace unit, or *danwei*—the grass-roots arm of the state that provides its members with an array of goods and services while simultaneously functioning as a mechanism of political control. Even in state enterprises, the pattern of controls that had created an institutional culture of worker dependence on the enterprise and its management was weakening.[78]

The coalescence of these factors contributed to the growing number of outbreaks of labor unrest. Although these outbreaks were small in number and impact, they provoked concern among China's leaders, who began to speak openly of the "risks of reform." According to the ACFTU, there were 97 strikes in China in 1987 and more than 100 in 1988, the largest involving 1,500 workers in a textile mill in Zhejiang province and the longest a three-month walkout by 1,100 workers in a medical appliance factory in the northwest of China.[79] Union officials candidly attributed the strikes mainly to strains generated by the reform process. They cited discontent over price rises and present wage levels, over problems in wage distribution and perceptions of unfair differentials in remuneration, and over infringements of the rights of workers.[80]

Thus, there was fertile ground for worker responsiveness when the student demonstrators took to the streets in spring 1989. The possibility that students and intellectuals might seek a Polish-style coalition with workers was recognized by China's leaders. Party octogenarian Chen Yun wrote a letter to Deng Xiaoping in late April 1989 in which he stated: "We must take strong action to suppress the student movement. Otherwise, it will only grow bigger and if the workers join in, the consequences will be unimaginable."[81]

Despite the leadership's fears, the escalation of the student protests into a mass movement appears to have been more in spite of than due to student efforts to broaden the societal basis of participation. Betraying a traditional Chinese elitism, the students initially argued against worker participation in the protests. Even at a later date, students refused to allow the founders of the Beijing Workers' Autonomous Federation to set up their tents near those of the students in Tiananmen Square.[82]

Regardless, the participation of workers in the movement on a large scale clearly raised the political stakes for the leadership, which sought to defuse worker involvement through a mixture of coercion, persuasion, and outright bribes in the form of bonuses to workers who pledged to stay on the job. The regime reserved its harshest words of criticism for the efforts of small groups of workers to establish independent trade unions. In the short span of several weeks in late May and early June, autonomous unions were established

[76]From comments by Wang Houde, vice-chairman of the ACFTU, to the National People's Congress on March 29, 1989, as reported by Xinhua, Mar. 29, 1989, in *FBIS-CHI*, Mar. 30, 1989, p. 23. The figures cited on the decline in urban income were said by Wang to exceed the 34.9 percent estimate of the State Statistical Bureau for 1988.

[77]*China Daily*, May 8, 1989.

[78]For a discussion of the dynamics of the original system, see Walder, *Communist Neo-Traditionalism . . .*; for an analysis of factors contributing to its loss of control, see idem, "The Political Sociology. . . ."

[79]*FBIS-CHI*, Sept. 6, 1988, p. 36, Oct. 25, 1988, pp. 21–22, and Feb. 4, 1989, p. 47.

[80]See, for example, the comments by ACFTU Chairman Ni Zhifu and Ye Qinghe, a member of the ACFTU Secretariat, in *FBIS-CHI*, Mar. 6, 1989, p. 32, and Oct. 25, 1988, pp. 21–22.

[81]*South China Morning Post*, May 4, 1989, in *FBIS-CHI*, May 4, 1989, p. 29.

[82]See Merle Goldman, "Vengeance in China," *The New York Review of Books*, Nov. 9, 1989, p. 5; and *South China Morning Post*, July 21, 1989, in *FBIS-CHI*, July 21, 1989, p. 14.



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in Beijing, Shanghai, Changsha, Tianjin, Hangzhou, Hefei, Hohhot, Guizhou, Jinan, Nanchang, Lanzhou, Nanjing, Xian, and Zhengzhou, with more than one union springing up in several cities.[83] The best known of these was the Beijing Workers' Autonomous Federation, established on May 19, 1989, which claimed a membership of 3,000 workers.[84] Small in membership (mostly consisting of young males)[85] and lacking in organizational coherence, these groups nonetheless posed a clear ideological challenge to the positions of both the party and the ACFTU. In its Provisional Charter, the Beijing Workers' Autonomous Federation stressed its intent to operate as an "entirely independent autonomous organization" and defined as one of its key functions "monitoring the performance of the Chinese Communist Party." Rejecting the traditional function of the unions as administrators of welfare, the federation promised, as a key principle, to "address the political and economic demands of the workers."[86]

With traditional controls breaking down in China, cadres within the ACFTU itself became increasingly emboldened to present their case against the leadership. Reform forces within the ACFTU had been bolstered by the unexpected appointment of Zhu Houze to the number-two position in the trade union hierarchy as a vice-president and the first secretary at its 11th congress, in October 1988. Zhu was an outsider with no previous experience in trade union work, but he was a respected intellectual and a close associate of Hu Yaobang. By spring 1989, Zhu seemed to be eclipsing the veteran leader Ni Zhifu as the dominant figure of the ACFTU. Journalists from the ACFTU's newspaper, *Gongren ribao* (*Workers' Daily*), expressed support for the students' demands for freedom of the press and the reinstatement of Qin Benli, who had been fired as editor of the liberal *Shanghai World Economic Herald*. The publication in *Workers' Daily* in April 1989 of an article praising Hu Yaobang reportedly so enraged President Yang Shangkun that he pressed for the removal of its author or the closure of the paper.[87] Staff members of the ACFTU joined in with other Beijing cadres taking part in pro-democracy marches. Even after the publication of the April 26th editorial in *People's Daily* condemning the student movement as illegitimate, the ACFTU indicated its support for the students. A five-point statement issued by the ACFTU on May 18 noted:

*The vast number of the students' patriotic, democratic, and progressive demands for promoting democracy and law, combatting corruption and government profiteering, and expediting economic and political reforms have received widespread sympathy from the working masses. The All-China Federation of Trade Unions strongly urges the principal leading members of the party Central Committee and the State Council to make prompt arrangements for face-to-face dialogue with representatives of students and to take effective measures and actual steps to put an end to the students' hunger strike as soon as possible.*[88]

Similar, but more strongly worded statements were issued by provincial-level trade union committees in Hunan and Shanghai.[89] Moreover, the ACFTU donated 100,000 yuan to the Beijing Committee of the Red Cross to be used for medical treatment for students participating in the hunger strike.[90]

## Post-Tiananmen Labor Policy

Although the evidence is inconclusive, the leadership's decision to impose martial law on May 20 was possibly precipitated by the growing militancy of China's workers and open signs of defiance by the ACFTU. Even before the crackdown on June 4, workers came in for harsher treatment at the hands of the regime than the students. On May 30, three leaders of the Beijing Workers' Autonomous Federation were detained by the police for questioning.[91] On June 2, the group was labeled "counter-revolutionary," although it was not formally outlawed until June 8. As a journalist noted on the occasion of the arrest of four workers in Shanghai:

[83]Among the cities that witnessed the birth of multiple autonomous unions were Beijing, Shanghai, Hefei, and Xian. *FBIS-CHI* and *SWB* are good sources of information about specific autonomous unions in China through their translations of provincial radio broadcasts in June 1989 banning autonomous labor activities. See *SWB* Far East transcripts for June 13–16, 19–21, 23–24, and 28, 1989; and *FBIS-CHI*, June 12–16, 22, 27–28, and July 31, 1989. Also see *News From Asia Watch* (New York), Nov. 15, 1989; and Chen-chang Chiang, "The Role of Trade Unions in Mainland China," *Issues and Studies* (Taipei), February 1990, pp. 75–98.

[84]*South China Morning Post*, June 2, 1989, in *FBIS-CHI*, June 2, 1989, p. 11.

[85]A prominent exception to this male predominance was Lu Jinghua, a member of the Beijing Workers' Autonomous Federation, who coordinated the union's broadcast station in Tiananmen Square and escaped from China after the massacre.

[86]*Punishment Season: Human Rights in China After Martial Law*, New York, Asia Watch, 1990, pp. 39–40.

[87]*Ching Pao* (Hong Kong), June 10, 1989, in *FBIS-CHI*, June 9, 1989, p. 25. According to this report, Ni Zhifu defended the publication of the article.

[88]*FBIS-CHI*, May 22, 1989, p. 80.

[89]Ibid., May 25, 1989, pp. 55–56, and May 18, 1989, p. 56.

[90]Ibid., May 18, 1989, p. 76, and May 19, 1989, p. 35. AFP reported, incorrectly, that the ACFTU donated 200,000 yuan to the hunger strikers; see *FBIS-CHI*, May 18, 1989, p. 56.

[91]*The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*, May 31, 1989.



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*Among some 500 protesters who staged a sit-in strike at the Beijing police headquarters on May 30, 1989, after the overnight disappearance of three leaders of the Beijing Workers' Autonomous Federation.*

**—Reuters-Bettman.**

"These people said the same things that the students were saying. Their crime was to be workers rather than intellectuals."[92] The tents of the Beijing Workers' Autonomous Federation were the first target of attack when the PLA forces arrived in Tiananmen Square on June 4.

Subsequently, workers have constituted the majority of those detained and arrested, have been subject to the worst conditions of detention, and have been more likely to have received harsh prison terms than the students or intellectuals. All persons whose executions were publicized by the government have been identified as workers, peasants, or unemployed; no student or intellectual is known to have been executed.[93] The regime, moreover, has devoted considerable energy to arresting workers connected with the establishment of independent trade unions. At present, leading figures of independent trade unions established in Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjing, Xian, Hangzhou, Hefei, and Hohhot have been reported to be under arrest; little information about the fate of these individuals has been available.[94]

In July 1990, however, it was announced that Han Dongfang, the leader of the Beijing Workers' Autonomous Federation would be brought to trial later in the year. Although Han, who was arrested without publicity in June 1989, had been formally charged in the spring with "counter-revolutionary" propaganda and incitement, it was now announced that he would be tried on criminal charges, presumably so as to portray him as an ordinary criminal rather than a political dissident in the style of Wei Jingsheng.[95] Reportedly, Han was held in solitary detention before being transferred to Banbuqiao prison, a notorious pretrial detention center. Although the more lenient treatment accorded students and intellectuals in large part reflects their greater status and superior connections, both domestic and international, it would appear that the residual fear among the Chinese leadership of the potential for organized industrial unrest also accounts for some of the ferocity that the regime has displayed in its treatment of the workers.

***Redefining party–trade union relations.*** In the aftermath of Tiananmen, the resurgent conservatives within the CCP also turned their wrath upon the ACFTU, seeking to bring it back into line as a docile instrument of the party. They removed Yan Mingfu from the CCP Central Committee Secretariat in late June, and passed responsibility for the administration of trade union policy to Ding Quangen, a member of the conservative faction. Also in June 1989, a disciplinary "work committee" was installed in the ACFTU to investigate the activities of federation members during the events of the spring. The fall of Zhao Ziyang spelled misfortune for Zhu Houze, who was reportedly one of 10 main targets of criticism in the aftermath of the Tiananmen events.[96] Although physically present, Zhu played no role at the July 1989 meeting of the ACFTU Presidium, and he was formally removed as vice-president and first secretary at the December 1989 meeting of the Executive Committee of the ACFTU Presidium. He was replaced by Yu Hongen, a former minister of the Coal Ministry. Additionally, Yang Xingfu was placed on the Executive Committee. Both Yu and Yang are believed to be political allies of Li Peng.[97] According to the Hong Kong press, Zhu has been held responsible for ACFTU actions in support of the pro-democracy movement. Reportedly, Li Peng singled out the ACFTU and the Stone Corporation as the "logistics headquarters for the counterrevolutionary rebellion and turmoil," accusing

[92]*Hong Kong Standard,* June 1, 1989, in *FBIS-CHI,* June 1, 1989, p. 21. For further elaboration of this point, see Walder, "The Political Sociology . . . ," loc. cit., p. 32.

[93]For further details, see *Punishment Season,* p. 37–40.

[94]For further information, see *News from Asia Watch,* Nov. 15, 1989; and *Punishment Season,* pp. 37–40.

[95]*South China Morning Post,* July 30, 1990, in *FBIS-CHI,* July 30, 1990, p. 24.

[96]*Chao Liu* (Hong Kong), Nov. 15, 1989, trans. in *JPRS-CAR,* Mar. 5, 1990, p. 24.

[97]*South China Morning Post,* Dec. 26, 1989, in *FBIS-CHI,* Jan. 3, 1990, p. 26.



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*Leaders of the Beijing Workers' Autonomous Federation: above, Han Dongfang; at the right, Lu Jinghua, the coordinator of radio broadcasts from Tiananmen Square.*

**—Asian-American Free Labor Institute and American Postal Workers' Union.**

Zhu of guiding the ACFTU on the road of Poland's Solidarity trade union.[98]

Athough Zhu's removal was a blow to reform forces within the ACFTU, the circumstances of his departure suggest that the power struggle between conservative and reform forces in the CCP is far from resolved. Unlike trade union leaders removed in the 1950's, Zhu has not been exposed to public criticism for his actions, nor, apparently, has it been possible for the conservatives to launch a full-scale purge of Zhu's supporters from the trade union apparatus.

The eclipse of Zhu opened the way for the political resurgence of Ni Zhifu, who has overseen a reorientation of the trade unions that has been essentially retrogressive. Once again, the federation is initiating 1950's-style campaigns to effect economies and increase production and to encourage workers to submit rationalization proposals. Socialist emulation has made a comeback. Workers have to contend with the resurrected Iron Man of the Daqing oil fields, as well as the ubiquitous Lei Feng. Certain explicitly Maoist themes have also returned to center stage: the importance of political and ideological education has been underlined as a priority in trade union work and the "red" vs. "expert" dichotomy has made a reappearance in criticisms of the excessive elitism and emphasis on expertise prevalent in the reform movement. All of these themes, however, have been subordinated to the major preoccupation, indeed obsession, of China's leadership in the development of union policy in the post-Tiananmen era: the reassertion of political controls and party leadership over union operations.

The Third Meeting of the Presidium of the 11th ACFTU Congress, held in July 1989, delivered a stinging indictment of the autonomous trade unions and an implicit rebuke to union cadres for insufficient vigilance in resisting attempts to form them. The basic premise of the meeting was straightforward: no trade unions opposed to the CCP will be allowed to be established in China, and all trade unions must work under the leadership of the party.

These themes were amplified in a "Circular of the CCP Central Committee on Strengthening and Improving Party Leadership over the Work of Trade Unions, the Communist Youth League, and Women's Federations," issued on December 21, 1989, but not published until January 31, 1990.[99] It stressed use of the technique of interlocking directorates to tighten party controls over units of the mass organizations at the grass-roots level. Party committees were enjoined to "study and decide important issues in the work of the trade unions, the CYL, and women's federations in various localities, to recommend to them principal responsible candidates to be put up for elections, and to coordinate the relationships that these bodies have with government departments and with one another." The circular also indicated that the party committees at a given level were to have more say in the actions of counterpart trade union, CYL, and women's groups than would higher-level bodies in the respective organ-

[98] *Chiushih nientaih* (Hong Kong), Mar. 1, 1990, in *JPRS-CAR*, Apr. 30, 1990, p. 19.

[99] *Renmin ribao*, Feb. 1, 1990; and editorial in ibid.



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izations' hierarchies.[100]

In essence, the circular was a formal repudiation of a decade of reform efforts that had sought to remove the party from its position of preeminent authority and to expand the base of decision-making in Chinese society.[101] This has left the unions bereft of the fundamental plank of their reform-era platform, with little of substance to fill in the gap. Certain vestiges of reform policy do remain. The draft Trade Union Law reemerged as an item on the political agenda at the April 1990 meeting of the ACFTU Presidium, and union leaders have on occasion tried to speak out to protect workers from the detrimental effects of the government retrenchment policy. But, by and large, empty rhetoric has been substituted for the concrete programs and critical assessments of union performance that had become commonplace during the reform period.

To the hard-liners in the Chinese leadership, however, the bankruptcy of current union policy is preferable to the formulation of an alternative that might provide an opportunity for reformist elements in the ACFTU to reassert their influence. As the Central Committee circular pointedly warned: "On no account is any organization allowed to engage in political advocacy against the party. By no means will any political organization opposing the four cardinal principles or undermining state power be allowed to exist."[102]

***The state of labor reform.*** On June 9, 1989, in his first public speech after the debacle of Tiananmen, Deng Xiaoping assured the cadres of martial law units that he had no intention of abandoning China's decade-long experiment with economic reform.[103] But the events of June 1989 had given increased power in top party echelons to individuals more conservative than Deng. They sought to move China back toward a reliance on the plan, rather than the market, as the chief regulator of economic activity. They moved to impose constraints on the operation of private and village and township enterprises in the form of higher levels of taxation and reduced access to credit and material supplies, and slowed, if not stopped altogether, the momentum of market-oriented reform in the state sector of the economy. Since Tiananmen, the Chinese leadership has shown its fundamental disinterest in promoting the measures that would compel state enterprises to become financially self-sufficient, an indication of the strength of the conviction that the state sector of the economy should be the primary beneficiary of state investment funds and subsidies.[104]

By early 1990, however, it was evident that the conservatives' course of action, combined with the continued application of the austerity program instituted in autumn 1988, was contributing to falling living standards for many of China's working people. The austerity program had reduced the rate of inflation to single-digit figures in the latter half of 1989, and inflation fell to a modest 4.1 percent for the first five months of 1990.[105] The costs of the economic retrenchment policy to workers were, however, high and included rising numbers of layoffs, reduced wages, the elimination of bonuses, and the institution of a highly unpopular measure forcing workers to donate a percentage of their wages toward the purchase of government bonds as a means of reducing the budget deficit.

Moreover, the conservatives' move to reduce the scope of operations of private and village and township enterprises demonstrated more ideological zeal than foresight, inasmuch as it flooded an already overburdened urban labor market with some 8 to 9 million displaced workers.[106] The overall dimensions of layoffs and unemployment are hard to come by, as figures differ considerably even among government departments. Some 3.78 million blue- and white-collar workers in the state and collective sector were reported to have been laid off in 1989, a trend that has continued into 1990.[107] In April 1990, the State Statistical Bureau reported a reduction of 1.4 million people on the government payroll for the month, almost 1 million of them through retirement.[108] In all, the Ministry of Labor, expected that in 1990, some 11 to 12 million people would be searching for employment in China's cities, with only an estimated 6 million job vacancies available.[109] Workers in the collective sector have been hurt even more by the economic downturn than have their counter-

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[100] *Xinhua*, Jan. 31, 1990, loc. cit., p. 5.

[101] See the article by Yu Yunyao on the role of the party in the enterprise in *Qiushi*, Feb. 1, 1990, pp. 12–17.

[102] Ibid, p. 6. For a discussion of party efforts to institute personnel changes in the YCL and the women's federation (in addition to the trade unions) see Qian Su, *Chao Liu*, Feb. 15, 1990, in *JPRS-CAR*, May 17, 1990, pp. 32–35. The "four cardinal principles" stressed by China's leaders today are a commitment to Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought, upholding the leadership of the Communist party, following a socialist course in economic development, and preserving the existing structure of the Chinese state.

[103] *FBIS-CHI*, June 27, 1989, pp. 8–10.

[104] Although estimates of the number of state enterprises operating at a loss run in the thousands, it was only in December 1989 that the first state-owned enterprise in China was declared bankrupt. See *Xinhua*, Dec. 6, 1989, in *FBIS-CHI*, Dec. 11, 1989, p. 38. *Zhongguo Tongxun She* (Hong Kong) reported on Nov. 18, 1989, that three enterprises in China had been declared bankrupt, but provided no further identification of the enterprises as to name or type. See *SWB*, FE/0622 B2/7, Nov. 24, 1989.

[105] *CEI Database* (Beijing), June 26, 1990, in *FBIS-CHI*, June 27, 1990, pp. 33–34.

[106] Tai Ming Cheung, "Looking for Work," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (Hong Kong), July 19, 1990, p. 49.

[107] *China Daily*, Apr. 19, 1990.

[108] Ibid., June 11, 1990.

[109] Tai Ming Cheung, loc. cit., p. 49.



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parts in state enterprises. The latter tend to be cushioned by subsidies, benefits, and relief payments under the 1987 "Provisional Rules on Insurance for Employees of State-Owned Enterprises Awaiting Employment."

Despite the repressive political atmosphere, Chinese workers have not been universally silenced. They have openly protested worsening economic conditions on a number of occasions since June 1989. Over 600 cases of industrial unrest were reported to have occurred in China in the second half of 1989. In late 1989, large-scale strikes and demonstrations took place in the cities of Luoyang in Henan province and Zhuzhou in Hunan province; these are believed to have been sparked by unemployment and wage reductions. In both cities, moreover, underground labor unions were reported to have been established. In Beijing, the most serious labor action involved hundreds of laid-off construction workers who staged a demonstration in January 1990 at the Ministry of Water Resources protesting the thousands of worker layoffs that the Ministry had put into effect throughout the country.[110] Despite official denials of such events, workers in more than 30 cities in China were reported to have sought permits in the later part of 1989 to demonstrate against worsening economic conditions, with small-scale marches said to have taken place in Chengdu and Wuhan.[111]

These actions suggested to China's leaders a deep-seated disaffection among workers that, unless alleviated, poses a serious threat to social stability. Evidence of worker discontent has helped to discredit the economic course pursued by the conservatives and to strengthen the position of the reformers in the Chinese leadership. It has also triggered a series of concessionary government measures that violate the economic objectives of conservatives and reformers alike. Starting in December 1989, the State Council has issued a series of directives that attempt to improve the material circumstances of white- and blue-collar workers. State enterprises were directed to pay workers, including those who had been laid off, a full 100 percent of their base wages; regional administrations were instructed to provide adequate levels of industrial production and employment at enterprises under their supervision; and banks were requested to provide credit to factories to pay workers. In the first half of 1990, the government took further measures to ease its austerity program, making credit more readily available in a bid to raise production.

Similarly, the leadership's sensitivity to the possibility that unemployed workers might take to the streets has contributed to its decision to loosen restrictions over the operation of private and village and township enterprises at the beginning of 1990. In January 1990, Premier Li Peng gave a speech that grudgingly conceded the necessity of continuing to develop the village and township enterprises.[112] The legal status of these collectively-owned enterprises received additional confirmation in July 1990 when regulations governing their operation went into effect. The Ministry of Labor has further called upon local governments to back the development of individual and collective enterprises through preferential policies of funding and taxation.[113]

By the summer of 1990, there was increasing evidence of a resurgence of reformist ideas within the Chinese leadership, reflected in the resurrection of discussions about price reform, the development of a strategy for developing coastal areas, and the conversion of state enterprises to joint-stock companies, all measures identified with Zhao Ziyang.[114] Indications that China's leaders are seeking to make increased use of market mechanisms does not, in itself, add up to a coherent economic strategy or guarantee a solution to China's economic woes, but it does indicate the inability of the conservatives to turn back the clock on a decade of Chinese reform efforts or to devise a feasible alternative.

Moreover, in the year since Tiananmen, the Chinese leadership has sought to adapt to its own ends, rather than to dismantle, the incipient efforts of the reformers to institutionalize the process of labor reform legislatively. The labor initiatives promulgated during the reform era have been left undisturbed, and other initiatives that were clearly in the administrative pipeline before Tiananmen have subsequently been promulgated. The most notable of these are the "Provisional Regulations on the Hiring of Temporary Workers in State-Owned Enterprises," released in October 1989, which also specify working conditions, the provision of medical benefits, and social insurance eligibility for short-term workers in state enterprises.[115]

The current leadership has tended to retain those

[110]*South China Morning Post*, Mar. 9, 1990, in *FBIS-CHI*, Mar. 9, 1990, pp. 26–27. Other protests in Beijing have included a short-lived demonstration at the Beijing Capital Iron and Steel Plant over the elimination of bonuses, and a sit-in at the Beijing Public Security Bureau in January 1990.

[111]See *South China Morning Post*, Jan. 5, 1990 in *FBIS-CHI*, Jan. 5, 1990, pp. 29–30; *Zhongguo Tongxun She*, Feb. 27, 1990, in *FBIS-CHI*, Feb. 28, 1990, p. 42; and Tai Ming Cheung, loc. cit., p. 49.

[112]See *Qiushi*, March 16, 1990, pp. 6–9.

[113]*China Daily*, Apr. 19, 1990.

[114]See the series of articles by Willy Wo-lap Lam in the *South China Morning Post* on May 3, 1990, in *FBIS-CHI*, May 3, 1990, pp. 19–20; June 3, 1990, in *FBIS-CHI*, June 5, 1990, pp. 29–30; July 23, 1990, in *FBIS-CHI*, July 23, 1990, p. 21; and Aug. 1, 1990, in *FBIS-CHI*, CHI, Aug. 2, 1990, pp. 26–27.

[115]*SWB*, FE/W0204 C/3, Nov. 22, 1989.



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measures that were designed to restructure the services that provided a safety net to workers on state salary. To the extent that schemes to institute a system of unemployment insurance and to reform medical care and retirement benefits are still under consideration, the focus is on employees of state enterprises.

What has been lost is a concern for the situation of workers on the periphery of the national economy. The regime has made no effort to address such problems as child labor, the indiscriminate extension of working hours, and hazardous working conditions in private and rural enterprises. The once lively discussion of such issues, moreover, has disappeared from the Chinese press. China's conservative leaders appear willing to countenance a dualistic division of the Chinese labor force and the differentiation in privileges and status that such a structure perpetuates.

That labor issues have not been definitively resolved, however, is suggested by the apparent continued deadlock over the formulation of a new labor law. In November 1989, it was announced that the first set of labor laws of the PRC would be submitted to the State Council and the National People's Congress in 1990.[116] Despite subsequent references to the law by officials within the Ministry of Labor and the ACFTU, there is no indication to date that the legislation is likely to make it past the drafting stage.

## Conclusions

In 1978, Deng Xiaoping endorsed a program of reform that sought to win workers' acceptance through an unabashed appeal to their material interests. The Dengist assessment at the time acknowledged the bankruptcy of Maoist ideological tenets as a source of regime support. A decade later, the Deng leadership finds itself borrowing shamelessly, if not from Mao, at least from Marxism-Leninism in insisting on the leading role of the party in trade union operations. Considering the failure of the reform efforts to set the unions permanently on a more independent path, the practical difference in trade union operations before and after Tiananmen may be only a matter of degree. But the fact remains that the current theoretical conceptualization of the role of the unions is more conservative than at any time during the reform decade. Likewise, the reform goal of enterprise democratization, pragmatic though it may have been in its conception, has been jettisoned.

In other areas of reformist labor policy, the impact of the post-Tiananmen leadership has been less pronounced. To a large extent, reform policy was not successful in altering the structure of employment or distribution within the state sector of the economy and, despite rhetoric to the contrary, never seriously threatened the security of workers who had come to view as virtual entitlements the package of benefits traditionally channeled to them through the enterprises. The Chinese reformers did, however, preside over a process of transforming production and ownership relations outside of the dominant state and large-scale collective sectors of the economy, leading to an increased differentiation in the labor force. Despite their initial efforts, the conservative wing of the Chinese leadership has not been able to do much more than place restraints upon the operation of the private and the village and township enterprises, and even these restraints have been largely abandoned in the face of overwhelming demographic pressures.

Since June 1989, Deng Xiaoping has repeatedly indicated his obsession with maintaining stability. He stated in June 1990: "Stability is very important to China. If China is unstable, the world will also be unstable."[117] For all the energies marshaled to stamp out any remaining vestiges of independent trade unions and to bring the ACFTU into line, China's leaders have recognized that such efforts will be fruitless unless they can simultaneously ensure that the rank and file of China's workers remain compliant. The leadership's fear of worker unrest has led it to forgo ideological considerations and to promote concessionary policies that attempt to alleviate workers' dissatisfactions with the system, at least with its poor provision of material goods.

The sensitivity of the leadership to the threat of labor unrest might seem somewhat surprising given the ease with which the regime was able to suppress the manifestations of worker emancipation in spring 1989. The events of 1989 were important symbolically for the precedent they set, not for what they actually achieved. They showed that organized worker protests, whether independent or in concert with students and intellectuals, are now a very real possibility in China. This potential will endure so long as a gap exists between what China's working people expect of their regime and what the regime is capable of delivering.

[116] *China Daily*, Nov. 28, 1989; and *Xinhua*, Nov. 28, 1989, in *JPRS-CAR*, Dec. 21, 1989, pp. 23–24.

[117] *Wen Wei Pao* (Hong Kong), June 16, 1990, in *FBIS-CHI*, June 18, 1990, p. 30.



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# Note

# Four Modernizations That China Needs

**Andrew J. Spano**

IN AUGUST 1988, I was invited to teach in China by the Ministry of Education as a foreign expert in education and English. After being in Taian, Shandong province, just a short while, it became clear to me that many basic human services that directly affect the quality of life of the Chinese people—such as transportation, health, agriculture, and education—were being neglected. It also became clear to me that the Communist party's reform agenda of Four Modernizations (in agriculture, industry, defense, and technology), even if it were successful on its own terms, would not address the serious deficiencies in these social services.

Since China's domestic economy is based on agriculture, it is not surprising that farming subsidies and extension services are paid lip service in all reform decrees. Yet, inefficiency and waste are the rule with China's agricultural resources (due, in part, to the inadequate transportation infrastructure), and the only reform farmers see is the decollectivization of farm land.

After the government began the selling, leasing, and distribution of arable land to individual farmers in 1978, China's large peasant population at last had some extra cash with which to purchase portable electronic goods (mostly radios and television sets). This revenue was generated by the sale of agricultural products on the domestic free market. Unfortunately, it seems these goods, which were relatively abundant after the introduction of Deng's economic reforms, eventually became an almost narcotic distraction from the dangerously decayed state of basic services. The general availability of these products gave the Chinese peasantry as well as the educated and cadre classes a sense that the overall quality of life was improving, when, in truth, essential services were rapidly declining.

This frenzy of consumerism was stimulated by rampant *guandao,* which translates directly as "official corruption" and has the meaning of profiteering.[1] The chief complaint against the Communist party was that some of its highest officials and their children were involved in schemes that involved purchasing foreign goods with hard currency embezzled from the state, and then selling them on the black market at outrageous prices. What the demonstrators in the spring of 1989 found most treacherous about *guandao* was that it was the state which had decreed that foreign goods could only be purchased legally with hard currency. The catch being that, except under some very special circumstances, it is against the law for Chinese nationals to

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[1]For example, a May 9, 1989, *China Daily* (Beijing) article claimed that "students raised the question of rampant speculation in color television sets." The article goes on to say that such profiteering is the result of "the huge gap between supply and demand" for color sets. *Guandao* had become such a problem that Chinese consumers had begun to expect the price of all popular or hard-to-find commodities—from peanut oil to refrigerators—to be inflated by profiteering at the government level. The lead story in the same issue of *China Daily,* entitled "Ministry Disciplines Official for Corruption," charged that a high-ranking provincial official had staged "lavish banquets" and had solicited "presents involving a total value of 5,336 yuan during his transfer from one of the poorest prefectures of the country . . . ." According to the article, the official was not prosecuted and was allowed to retain his post as a deputy of the Shaanxi provincial People's Congress—a typical conclusion in corruption cases involving high officials.



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possess or use *any* hard currency, especially FEC (foreign exchange certificates). Therefore, the state was literally stealing money from the people. Leaders of the democracy movement claimed to have plenty of real evidence against the children of such high party officials as Zhao Ziyang and Deng Xiaoping.[2]

Leaving the average consumer with no legal alternative to purchasing domestically-produced goods served to stimulate the economy, but it also encouraged the growth of a black market in foreign goods. As the black market grew, it began to be a factor in the erosion of economic gains. As more and more hard currency was diverted to the black market, the infrastructure supporting the basic services in China was neglected. The transportation system deteriorated, and some rail lines, such as the only one to the Tibetan Autonomous Region, were suspended altogether.[3] Health care was neglected, and contagious diseases, such as hepatitis, reached epidemic proportions in cities such as Shanghai. Productivity in the agricultural sector was at an all-time low.[4] Most significant, the educational system suffered from a lack of investment just as the better-educated were beginning to demand quality facilities, access to the latest information in the sciences, and a guarantee that they would have a say in the economic and political destiny of China upon graduation.

Living and working in China, it was not necessary for me to speak with dissidents to realize that reform in transportation, health care, agricultural life, and education was urgently needed. All that was necessary was for me to live the life of my educated and cadre-class colleagues; even the most fortunate among them were dangerously close to being victims of yet another devastating collapse of the Chinese economy. It also became clear, long before the death of Hu Yaobang, that there would be no reform of these four essential services without a radical change in policy at the top levels of the Communist party. It was also clear that this radical change would not come about without new leadership.

[2]Donald Morrison, *Massacre in Beijing: China's Struggle for Democracy*, New York, Time Inc. Books, 1989, p. 113.

[3]Complicating the decay of the rail infrastructure are crimes committed by rail employees, which have included theft of rail property. A *China Daily* article on May 31, 1989, stated that "2,577 staff members were found violating laws last year, a 100 percent increase over the previous year." The article goes on to say that, "A total of 869 employees were charged with theft of rail property. . . ."

[4]When questioned by demonstrating students from Beijing Agricultural University and Beijing Agro-Engineering University about the trend toward reduction of agricultural subsidies, Agriculture Minister He Kang said, "Excessive emphasis on industrial development and the overlooking of agricultural development had caused a serious imbalance between industry and farming." He added that "our estimate of the situation on the agricultural front in 1984 was too optimistic . . . ." See *China Daily*, May 9, 1989.

## Transportation

Nowhere was the need for investment more apparent than in the railroad transportation system. After only a short time in China, I became as indignant about the dilapidated condition of this essential service—which remains the only form of long-distance travel for 99 percent of the Chinese people—as the Chinese with whom I rode.

The chief obstacle to rail travel—and therefore the chief obstacle to all long-distance travel—is the unavailability of tickets. Train tickets for all four classes of travel, from hard seat to soft sleeper, are used as a form of currency on the black market, and are always extremely hard to get legitimately. The average Chinese must wait in a long line (sometimes for days) in order to purchase a train ticket. The only way to avoid such a wait is to buy foreign currency at a usurious rate using *renminbi* and purchase a ticket with FEC at the special ticket windows reserved for overseas Chinese and other foreigners.

During the Chinese New Year holiday in February 1989, I found myself at the Shanghai train station. More than 4,000 people crowded the drizzle-soaked plaza fronting the main building. Most had crammed themselves under the eaves in an attempt to stay dry. The waiting rooms inside were full. These would-be travelers, who looked like refugees from some terrible upheaval, were in fact just attempting to travel for the holidays. Black with dirt, their clothes soaked through, they huddled under blankets. Mountains of bundles tied with string divided one group from another. Some just seemed to have given up and were sprawled among orange peels, apple cores, cigarette butts, and human excrement. Hundreds pressed each other against the outdoor ticket windows.

At the main station entrance, a PLA soldier searched each vinyl valise, bundle, and bag, while another soldier checked the little red identification books all Chinese nationals must carry at all times. A Chinese person cannot buy a ticket without showing identification unless he poses as an overseas Chinese at the special ticket window. While waiting to buy my special ticket, I could easily pick out the Chinese nationals who had managed to buy FEC. After all, how many citizens of Taiwan, Macau, Singapore, or pre-1997 Hong Kong wear Mao jackets and army caps and smoke Big Chicken cigarettes?

This was the height of the winter travel season. I found rail travel in summer—the busiest travel season—to be even worse. Traveling during summer break, I discovered that securing a ticket on a train leaving Beijing for my next destination was a serious problem. The wait for a hard-seat ticket was two days;



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for hard-sleeper, four days; and a soft-sleeper was available only if you knew the right person to bribe. Since I did not, and could not spare the two weeks necessary to obtain a soft-sleeper ticket through China International Travel Service, I convinced myself—never having traveled in hard-seat class—that 10 hours of it would not be too bad.

When I arrived at the train station on a hot August day, the squalor was staggering. As in Shanghai in February, most of the travelers were sprawled miserably over their makeshift baggage, or had resigned themselves to standing or even squatting in puddles of urine. When boarding was announced, the persons without seat assignments sprinted onto the platform, knocking down the elderly, crippled, and weak, who then struggled up with the tragic look of beaten and starved outcasts.

The car appeared to be 80 percent overloaded (a figure that I later found out was the official government estimate). I had to argue for my assigned seat with the man who had already made himself at home in it. The temperature in the car was above 90 degrees Fahrenheit. I was near the toilet, a rusted hole in the floor. Stretched out in the fetid moisture trailing from this hole was a sleeping man, who remained oblivious to being trampled on for 10 hours. Once the train got going, passengers started tossing an endless stream of bottles, cans, styrofoam containers, plastic bags, and lit cigarettes out the window. To my added distress and that of my fellow travelers, much of this debris blew back into the car in a shower of green glass and glowing embers. Except for the man sleeping on the floor, no one looked content or the least bit comfortable. By the time I arrived at my destination, the train was so crowded with newcomers going to Shanghai that I had to climb out the window to reach the platform. Veteran hard-seat travelers will recognize this experience as typical.

As a foreigner, I had many advantages and options not available to the majority of Chinese travelers. For nearly all Chinese people, the only possibility of long-distance travel is by rail and by hard-seat class. The physical dangers, circumstantial pitfalls, and bureaucratic obstacles related to this form of travel often frustrate the best-laid plans of even the most resourceful Chinese traveler. If something goes wrong with their plans, few have the extra money to stay in a guest house or pay for additional meals. Rural workers often get trapped in an unfamiliar city without a *fen* or a place to stay. Even if all goes as planned, train passengers are still faced with the daunting ordeal of hard-seat travel. It is not the amount of padding on the seat that makes the conditions in this class of travel so bad; it is the entire demeaning experience.

The transportation system's ability to move goods and produce is equally miserable. I saw for myself, in train stations across Shandong, thousands of tons of wheat and corn piled in rain-soaked bags on loading platforms, waiting to be transported to the government's central warehouses. Since priority was being given to coal shipments,[5] these same bags moldered on those platforms for the entire year I traveled by railway between Taian and Shanghai.

## Health Care

Poor health care is another issue contributing to the general dissatisfaction with the central government. For a country that flaunts its "socialism," China's system of socialized medicine is worse than a joke: it is a health threat in its own right.

Before I went to China, I received a bit of propaganda in the mail that said: "All residents of China are entitled to full health care coverage at government expense, not including eyeglasses." Shortly after arriving at Taian Teachers' College, I learned that my colleagues —who had the same health plan as I—were loathe to go to the campus clinic. One said, "It's filthy, and the doctors don't know what they're doing. They ask you to diagnose your own problem, and then write your own prescription." Most preferred to go to the army hospital, where they had to pay but where the standards were much better. On a professor's salary of US$26 a month, they could hardly afford the medical care this clinic offered, but they were often willing to borrow the necessary money (which would take them months to pay back) just to avoid being treated at the campus clinic.

I did not fully understand how bad the campus clinic was until my wife came down with a cold and bronchitis and we made our first (and last) visit. The clinic was located in one of the most run-down buildings on campus. Like many Chinese buildings, this one, which also housed the hostel and the pharmacy, literally had not been properly cleaned since it was built 15 years earlier. The walls were streaked with coal dust and the slop kicked up when cold water had been splashed across the floor to "wash" it. Missing was the familiar smell of disinfectant that I associate with doctors and clinics.

We went into a cold, small, poorly-lit room where a man sat at a wooden desk bundled up in a Mao jacket and several layers of filthy clothes. A woman in the corner of the room was just withdrawing a needle from the

[5] I received this information from Dr. Martin Smith, who taught at the Shandong Institute of Mining Technology in Taian from September 1988 to June of 1989. He is now Professor of Mining Technology at the State University of Idaho in Moscow, Idaho.



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haunch of an old man. Egg shells, peelings from an orange, and cigarette butts were swept up in a pile in the corner. A few moments later, I saw a mouse browse there. It was winter, and a hot plate glowing on the floor was the only source of heat in the room. After we explained to the doctor what the problem was, he asked my wife to open her mouth and stick out her tongue. He flashed a smudged mirror down her throat, and agreed with us that she had a cold.

The first line of treatment was an injection of penicillin. Conveniently, the needle was ready; it was the same one that had been used on the old man. The woman wiped the needle with a rag dipped in soapy water and prepared to stick it in my wife. Our insistence on a change of needle elicited a kind of amused chuckle that we had often heard before: it meant "those crazy foreigners, so idiosyncratic!" After the injection, the doctor asked, "Well, what medicine would you like?" I told him, he scribbled out a prescription, and we were off to the pharmacy. We went home with vials of pills and capsules, which included more antibiotics than I had asked for. (The pharmacy would later run out of all antibiotics, its ration spent, and the campus of almost 2,000 persons would have to rely on sulfa drugs until the next fiscal year.)

After we had had this experience at the campus clinic, I read with renewed interest the various letters to the editor in *China Daily,* which related horror stories about hospitals in large urban areas such as Beijing and Shanghai. One was about a man who had crushed his toe at work. He hobbled to the nearest hospital and met a "doctor" slouching in a chair reading a novel. She was upset at having to bother with such a trifle. After he insisted that something be done for his toe, she threw down the novel with disgust and found a less busy "doctor." After a superficial inspection of the wound, the second doctor wrapped it in a bandage and applied some plaster.

In a few days the toe was infected. The man returned to the hospital only to be met by the same doctor. To punish him for the inconvenience of having to dress the wound again, she pounded the plaster off with a hammer. The man was in agony, but when he complained, she insisted that there was no other way to remove it. Having no form of official redress, and being unable to afford a better hospital (such as the run-for-profit People's Liberation Army hospitals), his only recourse was to write a letter to the editor. From what I was able to gather from newspapers, personal anecdotes, and my own experience, this story is typical of the incompetence and neglect many patients suffer in urban areas.

Hospitals and clinics in rural areas are even worse. Peasants get the worst possible medical care, and preventive medicine is seldom practiced at all. Not even solvable public health issues are dealt with effectively. For example, in Shandong province, rabies is a serious problem—in 1989 there were 60,000 cases of rabies among humans in the province. Under the circumstances, the most obvious solution is to vaccinate all dogs. However, since the rabies vaccine is not manufactured in China and therefore would have to be bought abroad for hard currency, the government has simply outlawed dogs in an attempt the prevent the spread of disease. However, since dogs are used to protect property in farming communities, and since Chinese tradition counts the dog among the five sacred domestic animals, peasants have widely ignored the ban. Nevertheless, the government's only response has been to reiterate its ban on dogs, and the spread of rabies remains unchecked.

The education of doctors in the countryside is conducted in medical institutes and universities located in the small rural cities. In Taian, there was a medical "university," which had just been upgraded from an "institute." Before the upgrade, in accordance with the Cultural Revolution plan, medical students had been selected, regardless of whether they had a high school education or not, for a two-year crash course in Western and Chinese traditional medicine. They were then deployed in the countryside to be "doctors" for life. Minimal educational requirements of this sort made it possible to "train" huge numbers of doctors. These "doctors" still practice in China's hospitals and are not required to return to the medical institutes for further study. Indeed, one need not have *any* training to be called a doctor. If someone practices traditional medicine as a hobby and then decides to hang out a shingle, such a person is considered to be a doctor.

After the pro-democracy movement began, students from the Taian Medical University demanded more funding for medical facilities in the countryside, as well as an increase in salary for doctors and the imposition of standards for medical education. They knew that the implementation of these measures would vastly improve medical care. They also wanted to help educate the peasants about preventive medicine and to teach them hygiene. Without proper education in these matters, China's peasants will continue to be ravaged by epidemics and will resort to traditional practices (such as appealing to dead ancestors for divine intercession in the prognosis of an illness) that have long hampered China's modernization drive.

In the countryside, forced abortions were common. If a woman would not have an abortion voluntarily, family members were encouraged with cash bonuses to contact the authorities. The pregnant woman would be



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seized, brought to the hospital, and tied to a table. The doctor would then perform an abortion against the woman's will, occasionally as late as the ninth month of pregnancy. One day while riding my bicycle, I happened upon a family group of about ten persons struggling to force a pregnant woman into a hospital van. The woman resisted as best she could in her condition, and was then hauled away to the nearby hospital. This type of coercion, besides being ineffective, also serves to estrange family members from each other and build resentment toward the government.

A final example confirms the sorry state of medical care in rural China. One afternoon a small group of students and an English teacher from the college came to my home with a chemotherapy drug for a student with cancer of the lymph nodes. The label was in English, and the doctor at the clinic (the one to which the teachers refused to go) could not read it. Such drugs are highly toxic and must be administered carefully. As I tried as best I could to explain the label, which called for the drug to be administered by means of an intravenous saline drip, the so-called English teacher had to ask her students to translate what I said into Chinese so she could understand it. The doctor wanted to know if he should administer one dose a day, or begin a new dose as soon as the old one was finished. Not being a doctor, and not seeing any indication on the bottle of when it should be administered, I declined to guess. I was, however, able to tell him that the label said the drug had expired. Such bungling and ineptitude in the health services provided by the government eventually translates into suffering and death.

## Agriculture

In the last five years, many misconceptions have arisen concerning China's peasants. Propaganda campaigns aimed at showing how much China was progressing economically led to the belief that the peasant class of China was "upwardly mobile." Stories in the media focusing on peasants building "villas" (outside of Shanghai) and driving around in privately-owned pickup trucks were, however, extremely misleading; only a small minority of peasants found themselves able to afford such luxuries.

The great majority still have to struggle to eke out a living. Peasants have no choice but to sell their produce to the state at a price far lower than the market price. Recently, the government has not paid them in cash but in IOU's, or "white tickets" (*bai piao*). The state has promised to honor these IOU's soon, although it has not said when.[6] After peasants have fulfilled their state quotas, they may sell their surplus at the market price in the cities, but income from this source is reduced by the high rents charged for market stalls and income taxes. Housing for the average peasant is extremely poor. Homes generally are small and uncomfortable. Most have only one to three rooms, and typically, they are heated with lignite coal, which emits sulfur dioxide and saturates the walls with soot.

In the mountainous regions of Shandong, a severe six-year drought has made the peasants' plight especially desperate. The river beds are dry, the terraces cut into the mountain sides are bare, and the irrigation aqueducts are empty. The canals and reservoirs built during the Cultural Revolution have been turned into farm land, since water no longer collects in them.

How many more years can Shandong peasants endure such a drought? Far from feeling the benefits of economic reform as they strap their plows to their backs and drag them through the fields, they merely wonder how much longer they can continue. Their discontent with the lack of the agricultural reforms designed to protect them during difficult times, and with the IOU system, is stifled in their desperate attempt to survive. One of my students from a mountainous area near the city of Lai Wu said that in his village people dress in rags and have almost nothing to eat and drink except grain and water brought in by the government.

This drought has had a serious impact on urban areas in Shandong as well. When I went to the famous Bao Tu spring in Jinan, the provincial capital, I was disappointed to see that it was completely dry. Chinese tourists climbed down into the dry spring bed to have their picture taken next to a rock with the characters for "number one spring under heaven" carved into it. It received this honor in the belief that the spring would never run dry. In the same month as my trip to Jinan, the wells at our college ran dry after the city water supply was cut off. The whole campus, serving more than 2,000 people, had no water for five days.

Even the tiny minority of peasants who manage to rise above the rest economically are not in a totally enviable position. They have been placed in social limbo. They are used by the party to create an impression of economic reform and prosperity to the outside world (to encourage investment and loans), and at the same time, they are scorned by the party and their neighbors as "bourgeois capitalists."

Both inside and outside of China, much has been written about the need for agricultural reform, and I can scarcely do justice to the subject here. The problem remains that enough has been said and now it is time to

[6] *Asiaweek* (Hong Kong), Sept. 1, 1989, p. 15.



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act. The central government needs to make a sincere hard currency investment in the agricultural goods transportation infrastructure, as well as in training for farmers, through extension services, in scientific methods of production and in prevention of vermin infestation.

## Education

The educational system in China, particularly at the secondary and post-secondary levels, is teetering on the brink of collapse. Dissatisfaction with this state of affairs was an important factor that led to the pro-democracy movement. Having been invited to China as a "foreign expert" in English and education, I had a perfect opportunity to observe the abysmal condition of educational institutions first-hand, in depth, at the rural level. As part of my duties, I visited four middle schools in the Taian Municipal District. In each one, my job was to observe my student teachers for one day during their practicum.

In China, the term "middle school" refers to what is called in the United States "junior high school" and "senior high school." Only a small percentage of China's student population completes middle school; only 1 percent go on to college.[7] Admission to all middle schools is based on examination test scores (the students with the highest scores go to the "best" middle schools), how much the student's parents are willing to pay for tuition, and what kind of connections they have in the party.

The first school I visited was called "Middle School Number One." As the name implies, it was considered the best middle school in the district. It was conveniently located in the most developed part of town, across the street from Communist party headquarters and sandwiched in between the living quarters of high local party officials. Allegedly, one needs especially strong *guanxi* (personal connections) with someone in power to get into Middle School Number One. A talk with the father of a student at the elementary school that feeds Middle School Number One revealed that the average tuition is 250 yuan ($67) per year, which is almost 25 percent of the annual salary of the average Chinese.[8] The father added, "But that doesn't include chairs, cash gifts for teachers, and potted plants for National Day." Indeed, when vacation time came, I saw hundreds of children lugging home their stools from school.

When it was time for class, I walked into a dark room the size of a lecture hall. It held 70 desks and as many students. There was no electricity, although there were light fixtures. The back windows of the room opened onto the only toilet for 1,000 students and staff—a latrine with no roof and enclosed by a brick wall. The stench was unavoidable. There was no central heating nor were there heaters, although the winters are severe.

The student teacher was known for his self-confidence, booming voice, and reasonable command of English, and I was impressed with his first attempt at controlling the class. The students were all about 14 years old, and appeared to be extraordinarily obedient. They bolted up from their seats when called upon, and shot back down without delay when they had finished stammering out their answers.

Twenty minutes into the 50-minute-long class, the novelty of seeing a new teacher wore off. The 70 boys and girls began to fall asleep, and my student was reduced to calling on the half dozen or so alert ones. Although the scene was not radically different from what I have observed in middle schools in America, there was a difference in the *degree* of inattention of the Chinese students: the bulk of them seemed practically comatose. After 30 minutes, everyone had lost all interest. My student teacher tried his best to present an interesting class, but the mechanical, rote nature of the teaching routine and the unwieldy number of students made it impossible for him to hold their attention long enough for them to learn anything.

Bored myself, I turned to the textbook the student teacher was relying on. It was printed on newsprint and bound with staples. It contained a measured balance of articles, exercises, vocabulary, and questions. The little stories were "moral" in the socialist mode and were generally unexceptional. One, however, caught my eye: it contained a transposition from what was clearly another book in the series. It read: "Join the Army, join the Young Pioneers, join the League, join the Party." Mix-ups in school textbooks are apparently common; in early 1989, it was discovered that 80,000 elementary school children had been issued textbooks that contained 30 pages of descriptions of prostitutes in Shanghai before the Revolution. The printer had been printing state textbooks at a loss and pornography at a profit.

The next day, I visited a second middle school, one that was considered a "poor" one. The reception room

[7]In China, only elementary school is mandatory. If you do not do well enough on the entrance examination at least to qualify for the least competitive middle school, you cannot complete your education. All who attend middle school pay tuition, and fees for books and other educational materials.

[8]The official Chinese government figure in 1989 was 93.75 yuan per month. Some sources indicate salaries of 110 yuan per month for a college professor, 45 yuan per month for a factory worker, and 80 yuan per month for a middle school teacher. Salaries vary from region to region, and the figures do not represent the considerable perquisites and benefits extended to party members. See Keith Wheeler, et al., *China*, Alexandria, VA, Time-Life Books Inc., 1986, p. 29.



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was considerably more humble. After a long time, the principal appeared, his Mao jacket rumpled and his hair standing on end. Standing in front of me rubbing his bleary eyes, he looked very much as if I had roused him from bed. He told me in Chinese that he was an English teacher. I found this odd, since he could not speak a word of English. The reception room had once been a classroom, and it had a large blackboard. Written in huge Chinese characters across the board was the slogan, "Build a Strong Socialist Country and Fight Corruption!"

As I suffered through another series of classes, the students looked extremely bored. I felt that I was having a recurring dream as I watched one student teacher after another go through precisely the same teaching ritual. I later asked one of my students if all classes were like this. "Yes," he said, "that's why we hate school." Now I understood why students often compliment their foreign teachers, saying that they are very "active" in their teaching. Chinese students are used to "inactive" teachers ensconced behind their lecterns.

Between classes, I was treated to the famous exercise routines—legacies of the Mao era. While drinking tea in a reception room with the principal, I heard the familiar "*Yi! Er! San! Si!*" (One! two! three! four!) of the routine blasted over a defective loudspeaker. I looked out the window and saw an empty campus. The principal told me the students were doing eye exercises in the classroom.

Instead of recess, students typically have structured exercise. The unavoidable impression is of military training. At 5:30 a.m., when I was trying to sleep, I would hear hundreds of middle school students running along the streets. Once, I got up to watch them at their exercises. The girls wore block-like high heels, and the boys wore pointy-toed vinyl shoes with metal taps. They clattered—an unruly and unhappy-looking herd—down the rough paved road. Much of their time was structured in this way, with constant emphasis on being obedient or disregarding personal comfort or needs. Exercise routines were as regular as the sunrise, and what impression they made on these children I could hardly begin to guess.

School "Number Six," the poorest one I visited, consisted mostly of students from the Hui nationality. They are Muslims, and live in a clearly defined area of the city. Their homes are adorned with Arabic writing, and they do not eat pork. The center of their community is a mosque built during the Ming dynasty. They are the poorest people in the city, and they must attend the most ramshackle school. Their tuition is 120 yuan ($32) a year. Even if the impoverished Hui earned as much as the average Chinese, the tuition still would have been more than one-tenth of their annual income.

Like many students the world over, students in China's primary and secondary schools did not find studying particularly enjoyable. However, Chinese middle schools are often oppressively boring. I know for certain that the teachers are by and large totally unqualified to teach and have had no more than six hours of teaching practice. The curriculum, textbooks, and teaching methods are prescribed by Beijing, and teachers cannot deviate from them, regardless of the region, dialect, or developmental level of the students. Most of the textbooks are saturated with propaganda. The end result is a system of education that is neither effective in terms of dispelling ignorance nor responsive to the specific conditions and needs of the region.

Conditions at the next higher level of education—the institutes, colleges, and universities—are similarly bleak. The miserable conditions I found at Taian Teachers' College were typical of those found at other colleges and universities throughout China. Living and working with my Chinese colleagues provided an opportunity for me to experience the hardships endured by members of the Chinese "intellectual" class.

Taian Teachers' College is a two-year teachers' training school funded jointly by the municipal government of Taian and the provincial government of Shandong. The college includes approximately 2,000 students and several hundred faculty. Founded in 1958, its purpose is to train teachers for the "junior middle school," which serves the first three levels of the six necessary to graduate from "middle school." In theory, teachers of levels 1–3 must have a degree from a four-year teachers' college or university; in reality, 50 percent of all English teachers at the middle school level do not have any post-secondary education whatsoever.

My students were conscripted from rural villages, where farming is often the only means of livelihood. In China, you *must* pursue the course of study chosen for you, and you *must* submit to employment (usually for life) in that field. The only possibility of escape is if you have relatives in high places who can divert your destiny from the state-ordained path. Generally speaking, if you are chosen to be a teacher, then a teacher you must be.

To be a teacher carries a stigma: teachers get very little social respect because of the anti-intellectual attitudes of Maoist Marxism-Leninism. Before the Revolution, teachers were usually Confucian scholars and highly respected. However, when the Communists pointed to Confucianism as the chief culprit in fostering China's "backward-looking philosophy" that allowed the "foreign devils" to monopolize the economy of the Qing dynasty, this negative stigma was passed on to



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the teaching profession in general. The stigma remains more or less intact to this day.[9]

The post-Revolution cultural attitude toward the teaching profession was expressed in the living conditions both teachers and students had to endure at Taian Teachers' College. On our campus 1,000 men lived in a huge cement hive, seven or eight to a room. There was no heat in the dormitories, although the temperature often dropped to below freezing for weeks on end. To make matters worse, many of the window panes were shattered or had no glass at all; in the winter, the mountain winds would often blow at 30 miles per hour. The electricity was frequently out, making it impossible to study at night. The one toilet on each floor generally did not have water. Students had to wash their clothes in sinks, where the water came on only once or twice a month for a few hours. At night, they used the sinks as urinals, since the only other toilet facility was a cement trench in the corner of the campus.

From 1958 to 1989, there was no place on campus to bathe. In 1989, a shower was built that campus residents could use one night a week, that is, when there was water. In the summer, all water on campus could be cut off for up to five days. The one shower facility had to serve the entire student body and faculty.

Before the Lunar New Year, I visited the students' mess hall. I followed a queue of students that stretched from the dormitory to the hall. Like a beggar, each student carried a metal bowl. The temperature in the building was just above freezing. About a thousand young persons crowded around two huge bowls from which the cooks ladled out soggy vegetables and tofu (bean curd) stewed in lard. To round out the meal, they were given a piece of *mantou* (steamed white bread), which they used to scoop the food out of their bowls. Many did not have chopsticks. Since there were no tables or chairs in the hall, students just squatted on the floor.

The classroom building where I taught was built in 1983, yet it looked like an abandoned factory from the Anti-Japanese War. Many window panes were broken or missing. The hallways were filthy and dark. The entire maintenance operation for the huge five-story building consisted of two ancient men with bent backs swishing straw brooms across the hallway floors. For one month a year, warm water struggled up through the radiators, bringing the temperature in the classrooms to above freezing. During this time, students crowded into the classrooms at all hours of the day trying to warm themselves and avoided the freezing dormitory as much as possible.

When there was no heat at all in the classrooms, I taught in a winter coat, and my students wore gloves as they dipped their fountain pens into frozen ink wells. Although it was pitch dark in the winter, they still had to rise at 5:30 a.m. for jogging, calisthenics, and propaganda blasted out on the public address system.

Many of my 19- and 20-year-old students had grey hair and deeply-lined faces, and were quite unhealthy. Most had bad teeth, or missing teeth, and were constantly afflicted with upper-respiratory problems from which it often took them weeks to recover. Much of the sickness could have been eliminated with a modest investment in the physical plant of the college. When I complained about conditions to the administration, I was told that the students found the environment a big improvement over what they were used to in the countryside. Even a superficial look at their villages showed the truth of this statement, but this did not excuse the terrible conditions at the college.

At the end of their two-year ordeal at the college, the vast majority of my students were forced to become middle school teachers in the impoverished, tumbledown villages which they had briefly left. A fortunate few went on to industrial, commercial, or political careers. But this required family members in high places or a substantial bribe to the right person. Passing the university entrance examination was the only other route —short of doing something illegal—to a better life. Only 16 of the students at Taian Teachers' College were permitted to take the exam, although hundreds more would have liked the opportunity to attend university.

But even the examination system was not based solely on merit. *Guanxi* remained a factor in who was given the chance to go to the university. According to college officials, 99 percent of the students who attend a teachers' college go on to be teachers for the rest of their lives. After their little taste of higher learning, they return to the villages, where nearly everyone (70 percent of the rural population) is effectively illiterate.[10] College students have seen what a teacher's life is like in China, and they dread it. Their reasons are simple: low pay, terrible working conditions, no social respect, and no hope of anything better. I met two middle school teachers who told me they earned 55 yuan ($15) a month. They would often visit me at lunchtime in the

[9]In his essay, "Synarchy under the Treaties," John K. Fairbank describes the social esteem and political power of Manchu scholars: "The ruling class of officials interpenetrated the scholar-gentry or literati, and the whole stratum of scholars and bureaucrats had special privileges and prerogatives which set them apart from the peasant masses . . . ." See John K. Fairbank, Ed., *Chinese Thought & Institutions*, Chicago. University of Chicago Press, 1967, p. 210.

[10]The qualification for literacy in rural areas is being able to read 600 characters; and in the urban areas, 800 characters. To read *Renmin ribao* (*People's Daily*), you must be able to recognize at least 1,000 characters.



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hope that I would invite them to eat with me. This was particularly true at the end of the month, when they had run out of money.

The combination of poor living conditions and the prospect of a dismal future produces in college and university students a state of almost complete apathy toward study. Chinese students may have been selfless and hard-working at one time, but not anymore. There are virtually no consequences for poor academic performance and no rewards for excellence. Thus, a "hard-working" student puts in a total of 20 hours per week of study, class time, and organized extracurricular activities.

The philosophy this apathy breeds is embodied in a student saying about grades: "Long live 60 marks!" (a barely passing grade), which is a parody of the now defunct revolutionary slogan "Long live Chairman Mao." The students know they will not fail, because the system so desperately needs them. If there is any delay in their graduation, the local quota of teachers will not be filled. Allowing them to cheat on exams is a popular way of ensuring that they pass. Their first experience with other ideas about test-taking ethics led to many shredded exams in my class. "Don't take it so seriously," one professor told me, "This sort of thing is common in China."

Foreign experts such as myself are lured to China to try to mop up the mess, while equally qualified Chinese professionals are ignored or remain trapped in academic byways. Administrators, teachers, and students alike try to struggle through the rubble of a collapsing system, while the top leaders in the land—many of whom have only the most basic education—hold total power over the quality of education.

With nothing to look forward to but the dismal certainty of becoming custodians of state-programmed education materials and methods, it is no wonder that my students seemed to be teetering on the verge of nervous breakdowns. Bad food and miserable living conditions and the lack of motivation have the effect of wearing down resistance both to disease and authority. Ambition for learning is dulled, and hope for a fulfilling future is all but dashed.

One of my students, distraught over his life, jumped from the window of his fifth-story classroom. Before he leapt, he said to his terrified classmates, "I am sorry. I do not wish to make you unhappy." He somehow managed to survive his fall of 60 feet, and was soon back in the classroom, where he sat away from the windows and did not speak. A girl from another department, learning a lesson from his attempt, jumped from the roof onto a concrete surface on the other side of the building. She died instantly. In the suicide note left on her bed in the dormitory she said she could not face going back to her village to be a teacher.

It is clear that many students believe China is in severe economic and political trouble, despite what they are told by their government. The situation seems so bad to them that many have abandoned hope for the future under the existing system and have been pushed to the point of willingness to sacrifice their lives for change. They see democracy, or at least some functioning element of it, as the only possible beginning on the road to solving China's worst problems. The intense and inconsolable feeling of despair for China's future felt by the country's young people was dramatically acted out by the democracy movement of 1989.



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# Books

# The Past in Bulgaria's Future

**Philip Shashko**

R. J. CRAMPTON. *A Short History of Bulgaria*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987.

ROBERT J. McINTYRE. *Bulgaria: Politics, Economics, and Society*. London and New York, Pinter, 1988.

JOHN R. LAMPE. *The Bulgarian Economy In the Twentieth Century*. London and Sydney, Croom Helm, 1986.

JOHN D. BELL. *The Bulgarian Communist Party from Blagoev to Zhivkov*. Stanford, CA, Hoover Institution Press, 1986.

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THE astonishing events in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe that are yet unfolding have no precedent in their sweep, speed, peaceful revolutionary character, and probable long-term consequences for the future of the area and the world. Not only the public, but students of the area and diplomats as well, are overwhelmed by the intensity and immensity of the transformations now taking place. The magnitude of these changes is already so great that even the most perceptive of the participants themselves cannot digest all the history that is being made before their very eyes.

The works under review were written before 1989 by scholars who have devoted considerable energy to research on Bulgaria, have spent time there, and know the country and its people well. Their studies, both those examined here as well as their other works on the subject,[1] not only acquaint us with a wealth of facts about Bulgaria's history, politics, economics, society, and culture, but also offer multidimensional approaches based on a comparison of Bulgaria's experience with those of other countries. Although the authors differ in some of their emphases and in the accounts they provide for particular events, periods, people, and ideas, they offer many common views of Bulgaria's history. The authors reveal continuities and changes in economic and political developments, especially with regard to the process of nation-building in the pre- and post-1944 periods. By comparing developments before and after 1944, they are able to analyze how Bulgaria was transformed from an agrarian and economically backward country into an industrialized modern nation.[2]

Historian Richard Crampton's principal aim is to provide an introduction to the study of modern Bulgaria's political and socio-economic history from the nation's 1878 liberation from the Turks to 1985. Although he makes some very insightful observations, this work is a

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[1]Among their other writings are: Richard J. Crampton, *Bulgaria 1878–1918: A History*, Boulder, CO, and New York, East European Monographs, 1983; John R. Lampe and Marvin R. Jackson, *Balkan Economic History, 1550–1950: From Imperial Borderlands to Developing Nations*, Bloomington, IN, Indiana University Press, 1982; Robert McIntyre, "The Small Enterprise and Agriculture Initiatives in Bulgaria: Institutional Invention Without Reform," *Soviet Studies* (Glasgow), No. 4, 1988, pp. 602–15; and McIntyre, "Economic Change in Eastern Europe: Other Paths to Socialist Construction," *Science and Society* (New York), No. 1, 1989, pp. 5–28.

[2]For a view of contemporary developments in Bulgaria different from those presented by the authors whose works are examined in this essay-review, see Alex Alexiev, "Demystifying Bulgaria," *Problems of Communism* (Washington, DC), September-October 1985, pp. 89–94. That essay-review examined the writings of three Bulgarian émigré writers.



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survey and not an interpretative synthesis. Robert McIntyre, a comparative economic historian, finds Bulgaria to be a "surprising and intriguing country in many respects" and has written a succinct study of contemporary economic, social, and political "successes and inexplicable malfunctions." He is interested in explaining "why arrangements work when they do, noting and criticizing when they fail or work perversely" (p. xii). John R. Lampe, a specialist on Balkan economic history, has written a work that is especially useful in identifying the ways in which the periods before and after the Communists' accession to power in 1944 "are connected and the ways in which they are not" (p. viii). Finally, John Bell presents an historical survey of the Bulgarian Communist Party from the origins of the Social Democratic Party in 1891 to the mid-1980's. He describes the formation of the party in 1919, its ability to marshal support and attain considerable influence in the 1920's and 1930's, and its success in gaining power in the 1940's.

These authors attempt to show how and why events, individuals, ideas, and movements enhanced or hindered the socio-economic and political development of the country. Reading their works, one is left with the impression that the Bulgarian Communist Party was to a considerable degree successful in transforming the country, and that, in turn, the party itself was changed by its interaction with Bulgarian society.

ALTHOUGH contemporary Bulgaria is a young nation-state, the history of the Bulgarian people reaches back to the early medieval period. The first (681–1018) and second (1185–1393) Bulgarian empires were characterized not only by the establishment of notable state and religious institutions and territorial vastness but also by high cultural and artistic accomplishments. Crampton correctly notes that during the first empire, the Bulgarians managed to establish "a form of national cultural consciousness," and argues that despite the fact that it was far from the idea of modern nationalism, this "sense of identity was strong enough to preserve the concept of Bulgaria as a distinct religious, cultural and, perhaps, political entity" (p. 5). The nation's sense of identity is a factor that other historians have also stressed as important to the continued existence of the Bulgarians as a people.

The Ottoman conquest in 1393 destroyed the Bulgarian state and its institutions, placed the Bulgarian Church under the jurisdiction of the Greek Patriarchate of Constantinople, eliminated the country's elite, and brought about demographic transformations. However, the Bulgarians, due in part to the lasting achievements of their imperial past, were able to survive as an ethnic group. Soviet Academician Dmitriy Likhachev has stated that the Bulgarian "state within a state—the state of the spirit,"[3] created primarily by Saints Cyril and Methodius and consolidated by Bulgarian literature, continued to endure throughout the Ottoman centuries. It was, therefore, primarily the spiritual and cultural achievements and national traditions that provided the bases for the unity of Bulgarian history and its people during the centuries of foreign rule.

The gradual decline of the Turks from the 17th century onward was accompanied by the *vuzrazhdane* (national renaissance) of the Bulgarians. A combination of such favorable factors as an increase in the Bulgarian birth rate, the continuous movement of Bulgarians into cities and their acquisition of economic power, the numerous wars waged against the Ottomans by the Habsburg and Russian empires, and the sheer endurance of the people enabled the Bulgarians to give new vitality to their national life.

Over time, the Bulgarians' ethnic awareness evolved into a national consciousness that came to be expressed in Bulgarian national institutions. By 1878, the process of accelerated development had led to the creation of some 2,000 schools providing free education—including high schools, and pedagogical and theological academies—and about 200 *chitalishta* (reading-rooms), all supported by the people themselves. In addition, various educational, cultural, socio-economic, and political societies were formed. Printing presses and newspapers, book-publishing houses, a standard literary language, and modern literature were created, and Western-style dress was introduced. The establishment of an independent church in 1870—the Exarchate—was, in fact, the formal recognition by the Sultan of the existence of a distinct Bulgarian nation.

The accomplishments of the *vuzrazhdane* were crowned with the formation of legal and illegal national political and revolutionary groups and movements, such as the Bulgarian Central Revolutionary Committee, which fought for an independent nation-state. The leaders of these groups—the founding fathers of modern Bulgaria—are regarded today as national heroes.

During the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78, Bulgarians supported the Russian army, whose victory brought the liberation of the coun-

[3]D. Likhachev, "The Forward Line of Defense of the Bulgarian State of the Spirit," *Purvi mezhdunarodni kongres po bulgaristika. Plenarni dokladi* (The First International Congress of Bulgarian Studies. Plenary Addresses), Sofia, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 1982, pp. 96–97.



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try. The Treaty of San Stefano, imposed by Russia on Turkey, provided for the creation of a large Bulgarian state that included present-day Bulgaria plus Macedonia and most of Thrace. However, at the Congress of Berlin, the Great Powers, mainly Great Britain and Austria-Hungary, decided to dismember the new state. In the words of McIntyre, this move created conditions "that leave even today border disputes and irredentist feeling" among the Balkan states, and at the same time "set the conditions for permanent Bulgarian dissatisfaction with [the country's] frontiers, created an especially malignant problem with respect to Macedonia, and provided the basis for the ultimately self-destructive course" taken by the rulers of the country in four 20th-century wars (p. 18).

THE critical national issue facing the Bulgarians in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was the building of a unitary nation-state with Macedonia included within its borders. This process was a difficult and uneven one, hindered by the Turkish heritage, the backwardness of the country, and foreign interference.

Even before the unification of northern and southern Bulgaria, Macedonia was the focal issue that dominated public life. As Crampton states, "the reacquisition of the lost territories of San Stefano was a sacred national objective" (p. 50). Throughout Bulgaria's modern existence, the struggle for Macedonia was waged on many fronts with the use of diverse tactics, and it became the battle cry of revolutionaries, terrorists, politicians, the military, educators, and writers, as well as of peasants and students. Crampton skillfully traces the impact it had on both domestic and foreign relations as it prevented the government and society from devoting greater attention to economic development and social progress inside the country, while influencing relations with neighboring states and the Great Powers. The gravity of the problem is reflected in the fact that Crampton mentions Macedonia and the Macedonian question more often than any other issue. People of all walks of life had to deal with it, and figures like Stefan Stambolov and Aleksandur Stamboliyski, two of Bulgaria's greatest statesmen, lost their lives, in part, over issues concerning Macedonia. The question has been so significant that even today it remains a problem dividing Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and Greece.

The Communists also had to deal with this problem, and their policy was not always consistent. In the 1930's and 1940's, for example, party leaders agreed with the view that the Macedonian Slavs were ethnically Macedonians, that is, different from the Bulgarians. However, this concession and even a few others made later to the Yugoslavs did not prevent Georgi Dimitrov from resisting attempts to incorporate Bulgarian Macedonia into the Yugoslav Macedonian republic. Dimitrov also did not allow Bulgaria itself to be incorporated into Tito's program for a Balkan federation, although after World War II he had advocated such a federation himself.

By the 1960's, writes Crampton, the Macedonian question "remained and was one on which Bulgarians—Communists and noncommunists alike—could unite," that is, they all agreed that the Macedonians were ethnically Bulgarians (p. 190). Recently, under changed conditions, many of the old Macedonian organizations have reappeared and new ones are being formed.[4] Undoubtedly, they will, once again, play an important role in the country's national life. The reactions to these new developments on the part of Macedonians on both sides of the border will certainly have a significant impact on the future of Bulgarian-Yugoslav relations.

THE Turkish minority in Bulgaria as well as Bulgarian Muslims receive their due coverage in these works. Today's Turkish or Muslim question in Bulgaria, like the Macedonian question, presents a problem for politicians and the public alike.

Turkish-speaking inhabitants constituted about 17 percent of Bulgaria's population in 1892 and about 11.6 percent in 1910. Crampton believes that the principal reason for their emigration from Bulgaria was an "unwillingness . . . to adapt to the mores of the new, Christian state" (p. 71). According to Lampe, some 340,000 Turks emigrated between 1912 and 1939; and an additional 200,000 have emigrated since 1944. As a result of these migrations, the Turks' share of the population fell to 8.6 percent by 1956. By 1965 it had gradually risen to 9.1 percent (pp. 17–18). Although the Turks' share of the population rose in the 1970's and 1980's, by 1989 it had fallen again because of the exodus of about 300,000 Turkish Bulgarians in the summer of that year. Since that time, more than 100,000 Turks have returned.[5]

In 1934, the authorities Bulgarized Turkish names of towns and villages but not Muslim personal names. In 1981, in an effort to create the impression that all citizens of Bulgaria were ethnic Bulgarians, the government deleted the category of "nationality" from internal passports. Then, in 1984, a deci-

[4]See Duncan Perry, "The Macedonian Question Revitalized," Radio Free Europe Research, *Report on Eastern Europe* (Munich), Aug. 24, 1990, pp. 5–9.

[5]Duncan M. Perry and Louisa Vinton, "President Talks to Polish Editor," ibid., Sept. 14, 1990, p. 5.



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sive step was taken to force Turks and other Bulgarian Muslims to Bulgarize their names. Crampton believes that "fear" of the Turks' high birth rate "may have prompted" the policies of the government. Bulgarian leaders also believed that pan-Turkish propaganda spread by the Turkish government contributed to a rise of Turkish nationalism in Bulgaria. The "idiotic assertions" and claims that the Muslims were in fact Bulgarians "is difficult to understand," even though the party program called for the creation of a unitary or unified socialist fatherland. Crampton speculates that the measures taken against the Turks might have been an attempt on the part of the regime to weaken Islam, which, as a conservative faith, hindered modernization (pp. 204–05).

The emigration of the summer of 1989 created not only political problems for the Bulgarian government but also labor shortages and other problems for the Bulgarian economy. In addition, it aggravated an issue that had hindered good relations between Bulgaria and Turkey throughout the postwar period. The question of the Bulgarian Turks has provoked much discussion and disagreement among Bulgarians. Although a sizable number had supported the old regime's policy, the majority, particularly dissidents and reformers, have opposed it. Since the removal of the Todor Zhivkov regime, Communist leaders and the newly established opposition parties have condemned the old policies toward the Muslims.[6]

THE works under review treat the problem of political power in some detail and support the premise that attempts in this century to create a viable parliamentary and democratic system in Bulgaria were unsuccessful. Workable democratic parliamentary governments were the exception rather than the rule. Most of the various political parties and movements relied on their charismatic leaders rather than on some specific and reasonable program. Moreover, an important shortcoming that frequently led to misunderstanding and even violence was the absence of a democratic political culture. This made it very difficult for politicians to learn the art of political compromise, which is necessary for the proper functioning of a parliamentary system.

The problem of democracy was closely related to the question of centralization versus decentralization of power, which took the form of struggle between the prince (and after the declaration of independence in 1908, the tsar) and the minister president on the one hand, and the national assembly on the other. More generally, the struggle for power was reflected in the contest between the bureaucracy in the capital and the provincial and local governments. In early-20th-century Bulgaria, as Lampe shows, no city could really challenge Sofia's power. Even today Sofia dominates political, economic, social, and cultural life.

The centralization of power can best be seen in the rule of Minister President Stefan Stambolov (1887–94), Prince Ferdinand's "personal regime" from the second half of the 1890's to World War I, his son Boris's "controlled democracy" from 1935 to 1943, and, of course, the period of Communist party rule. Crampton indicates that *partisanstvo,* or "political trafficking in public office," became a "powerful weapon at the disposal of the executive." This "ugly disease" arose from an overabundance of educated people and the shortage of public offices and jobs. Many of the socio-economic and political problems that constantly plagued the country derived, in part, from *partisanstvo* and "the debauching of the intelligentsia" (p. 74). Under the Communists, this phenomenon persisted in different forms: "Just as a substantial part of the intelligentsia which created the nation fell victim to *partisanstvo* . . . so the [Communist] party, which engineered the socialist revolution, has fallen victim to careerism" and opportunism (p. 208).

The manifold forms of struggle for power and influence particularly alienated the peasants, who constituted the majority of the country's population, and who came to distrust city bureaucrats and the intelligentsia even before their leader, Aleksandur Stamboliyski, raised anti-urbanism into an ideology. Even such endeavors as the successful cooperative movement at the beginning of the century and the coming to power of the Agrarians in the 1920's failed to bridge the gap between city and countryside. The urban-rural cleavage continued into the post-1944 period as peasant suspicion and hostility to collectivization became so widespread that even the Communists had to move cautiously in forcing the peasants first into cooperatives and then into collective farms.

The distrust continued even after peasants moved into the cities in the late 1940's and early 1950's. There, extreme disenchantment

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[6]The Gypsies or Romanies are another minority group that is presently making itself heard. It is estimated that Gypsies in Bulgaria number more than 500,000. See Simon Simonov, "The Gypsies: A Re-emerging Minority," ibid., May 25, 1990, pp. 12–16.

Generally, Bulgarians have not exhibited a xenophobic attitude toward foreigners living in their country. They have welcomed into their country Armenians persecuted by the Turks. They also went to great lengths to save Bulgarian Jews during World War II. On this topic, see Frederick B. Chary, *The Bulgarian Jews and the Final Solution, 1940–44,* Pittsburgh, PA, The University of Pittsburgh Press, 1972; and Christo Boyadjieff, *Saving the Bulgarian Jews in World War II,* Free Bulgarian Center, 1989.



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was engendered by the bureaucratic command methods the new urban dwellers had to face as they discovered that the dictatorship of the proletariat and workers' democracy existed only in form and not in substance.

Also related to the struggle for power was the role of the military in Bulgarian politics. As early as 1886, when officers conspired against the prince, writes Crampton, "the intervention of the army meant that a new factor had entered into politics and constitutional supremacy could not be guaranteed without control of this new factor" (p. 39). The army and the police were most often used by the executive to control the people. Moreover, army officers became directly involved in politics by forming, for example, the Military League, which overthrew Stamboliyski in 1923. Mid-level army officers also staged the coup d'état in 1934. Thus, the coup, according to Crampton, "had become a traditional feature of Bulgarian politics, as had violence. The second was to follow inexorably upon the first" (p. 134).

Although the Communists have been able to control the military, in 1965, "dissatisfied" officers conspired against Zhivkov's "overreliance upon and supine obedience to the Soviet party" (p. 185). Bell writes that the conspirators, who were accused of Maoism, resented Zhivkov's "favoritism" and "cronyism" (pp. 125–26). Rumors have surfaced of other attempts against Zhivkov, but no real evidence has yet appeared.[7] More recently, General Dobri Dzhurov, the minister of defense, supported reformist leaders in the party's Politburo in toppling Zhivkov, an action that set the stage for political reforms, political pluralism, and democracy in the country. Should instability threaten the country, the army might, once again, become involved in politics.

THE changes of 1989–90 have reduced the Communist party's role in Bulgarian society from a vanguard organization to a party that—although still dominant—must compete with other parties and organizations for the allegiance of the Bulgarian people. Having been written before 1989, the books under review could not, of course, deal with these recent changes, but they do devote considerable attention to the rise of the Bulgarian Communist Party and the years of its monolithic rule.

By 1944, the Communists had established a base in the political and intellectual life of the country. They were the heirs of a socialist tradition that went back to the formation of the earliest socialist party in the Balkans. The Communist party did fairly well in national elections in the 1920's and 1930's and, at times, was the second largest group in parliament. It also controlled numerous city and village councils. In addition, some of its leaders, such as Dimitrov and Vasil Kolarov, had acquired international reputation and prestige.

In the last stages of World War II, a number of factors combined to give the Communist party a dominant position in Bulgarian politics. The most significant factor, of course, was the presence of the Soviet army in the country during the transition period and the party's willingness to accept the guidance and dictates of the Soviet Communist party. Moreover, as Lampe indicates, the fact that the Soviet Union promised Bulgaria "the patronage which no other Great Power had accorded it" brought the Communists considerable support (p. 124). The anti-fascist and especially pro-Russian/Soviet political climate also favored the Communists' cause, and they knew how to make use of it in their drive to power. The Communists' organization, discipline, dedication, and ruthlessness were also significant factors in their acquisition of power. By contrast, the non-communists suffered from internal divisions, organizational weakness, and a lack of aid from the Western democracies.

Thus, the communization of Bulgarian life in the late 1940's was, as Bell writes, "neither instantaneous nor simply the product of Soviet bayonets" (p. 77). The membership of the party rose from little more than 13,700 in September 1944 to more than 422,000 in 1946 (Lampe, p. 121). The party's youth organization also had thousands of members. The size of the party and its subordinate organizations assisted it in taking power at the critical moment. Moreover, by controlling the ministries of the interior and justice, the machinery of propaganda, and the member-organizations of the Fatherland Front, the Communists were able to manipulate public opinion and control political life. Taking advantage of the anti-fascist political climate, they put on trial all "war criminals" and "collaborators" in the so-called people's courts, and later on discredited and eliminated from political life all those who disagreed with their policies.

By early 1945, the people's courts had tried 11,667 individuals, and about 2,000 of them were condemned to death. The rest were imprisoned or exiled. However, unofficial estimates place the number of victims anywhere from 30,000 to 100,000. The percentage of people subject to criminal sentences was higher than in any other country in Eastern Europe (Crampton, p. 149). Among the reasons given for this

[7]New information on this topic will certainly be forthcoming, but as of now the best account is in J. F. Brown, *Bulgaria Under Communist Rule*, New York, Praeger, 1970, pp. 173–87.



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large number were "the revenge upon their former tormentors" by leftists who had been imprisoned before 1944, the "mixing of personal vendetta and political vengeance" (Crampton, p. 149), and the fact that the forces supporting the old regime were stronger in Bulgaria than in most of the other states, where civil war and emigration had significantly diminished their numbers by the time the Communists took power.

The early trials and executions carried out by the government eliminated the right-wing and conservative forces. By the end of 1947, almost all members of the noncommunist left who were unwilling to collaborate with the Communists were silenced. The execution of Nikola Petkov, the leader of the Agrarian party, in September 1947, "marked the end of the real battle" between the Communists and their opponents, for it removed the last obstacle to the Communists' seizure of power (Bell, p. 162).

ONCE in control, the Communists embarked on a program that transformed the physical landscape of the country, and the political, economic, and cultural character of society. Although Bulgaria had some modern industry, by 1938, this sector accounted for just 5.6 percent of the national income, by far, according to Lampe, "the lowest in southeastern Europe" (p. 94). The prewar Bulgarian state owned and controlled some industrial enterprises, and as Lampe writes, "the size of the state's economic activity was significant, despite the absence of much effort to coordinate or modernize it" (p. 100). The state's involvement in industry and trade thus prepared the ground for the Communists' assertion of control over the economy.

Before the general nationalization of industry, the Communist-controlled government took over the enterprises owned by those it deemed fascist or Nazi collaborators. In December 1947, the state nationalized about 6,000 private businesses. From 1948 on, the regime enforced rigid centralized planning that followed the Soviet pattern more closely than did that of any other country in Eastern Europe.

In the late 1940's, leaders such as Dimitrov and Traycho Kostov defined rapid industrialization and urbanization, improvements in education, and the diversification of production and technology as the way to raise the quality of life. According to Lampe, the "economic revolution" carried out by the Communist party consolidated the political revolution (p. 121).

By the mid-1960's, the methods used to modernize the economy had outlived their usefulness. Reform in Bulgaria was spurred by labor shortages, the growing role of foreign trade, and the leadership's realization that economic growth could come only through structural change, which amounted to the "streamlining of state planning and the decentralization of ministerial controls. Its goal has been to create greater efficiency, not a market economy" (Lampe, p. 199). During 1963–68, the government introduced the "New System of Management," which was supposed to serve as a model "social experiment" and to increase efficiency. A number of enterprises were placed under this system, in which wages, bonuses, and even investment were tied to plant profitability.

Another series of reforms put forth during the late 1970's and early 1980's was termed the "New Economic Mechanism." Among other measures, the government granted enterprises the authority to sell above-plan output once state contracts were fulfilled, made further efforts to link the enterprise wage fund to productivity, and sought to institute enterprise financial accountability and self-financing. Throughout the 1980's, the leadership promulgated additional economic reforms ostensibly aimed at decreasing central control. These new initiatives did not in fact lead to a decrease in the involvement of the party and government in economic matters. They aimed only to increase economic efficiency by instituting local self-management, without decentralizing and sharing economic and political power with society.

Related to the problem of economic development was the problem of a polluted environment. Bulgaria's planners did not realize that development entailed more than economic growth or making Bulgaria into an "advanced technical nation." By the 1970's, it had become apparent that the one-sided development was polluting the environment and degrading the people's dignity. (By the 1980's, the first open dissidents were those involved in environmental groups such as *Ecoglasnost.*)

THE collectivization of agriculture played an important part in the development of the economy. In Bulgaria, collectivization was accomplished in a number of phases and with some variations from the Soviet model. The government, aware of the peasants' opposition to collectivization, moved much more slowly than it did with the drive to nationalize industry. At first, as Lampe points out, "liberal terms" were offered to peasants to attract them to the collectives. A peasant did not have to contribute all his land, and the collective paid the former owner rent for the land it used. These two conditions "unique in post-war Eastern Europe, reflected the party's lingering hopes for a flood of voluntary



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members" to the collective farms (p. 125). When this flood did not take place, the Communists disregarded their own promises and used force against the peasants to complete collectivization by 1958.

In the early 1960's, Bulgaria was the first country in Eastern Europe to introduce a minimum wage for collective-farm workers. New collective-farm statutes in 1967 led to greater efficiency and also "extended pensions, health benefits, and other social services to peasant members before any other Eastern European regime" (Lampe, pp. 203–04).

Another new stage in agriculture was then inaugurated with the introduction of the industrial-agricultural and the agro-industrial complexes in the 1970's. These new initiatives resulted in "the horizontal integration of existing collectives into state farms." Then, through vertical integration, the government introduced industrial methods into agricultural production (Lampe, p. 206).

Closely related to these developments was the regime's emphasis on private agricultural plots, which represented a revival of private farming in the country. These plots evolved from the earlier policy of leasing land to the peasants to the leasing of plots held by the agricultural complexes to both peasants and to those townspeople who were able to work them in their free time. These plots have greatly increased Bulgarian production of dairy and meat products, vegetables, and fruit. The opportunities for personal initiative afforded by the private plots and the small private manufacturing firms set up for the production of consumer goods are seen by Lampe as "a departure from the Soviet pattern of central planning and ministerial supervision for large units of production." In addition, such measures have helped "to keep the Bulgarian black market one of the smallest in Eastern Europe" (p. 226).

Bulgaria's agriculture, according to Lampe, "is perhaps the most progressive, by any definition, among all East European economies." From 1956 to 1970, for instance, crop and animal production grew at an annual average of 4.1 percent per capita, a "higher rate than that achieved anywhere else in Eastern Europe." Agriculture's share in net investments rose from 15 percent in 1950 to 28 percent in 1960, also "the highest" for Eastern Europe. Thus, Bulgaria was the first country in the area to overcome one of the most serious failings of the Soviet pattern of collectivization; it recognized that "reorganization of agriculture was not a substitute for large investment" (p. 169).

In February 1990, the government took measures that promise a further rise in agricultural production by permitting an increase in the size of the private plots. This reform is significant and could prepare the way for the transition to a more market-oriented economy in the 1990's. All political parties in Bulgaria, including the Bulgarian Socialist Party (formerly the Communist party), advocate a market economy for Bulgaria. They disagree over the means necessary to institute radical economic reform.

IN ADDITION to agriculture, foreign trade has played a very important role in Bulgarian economic development, especially with regard to increases in the standard of living. Here, too, Lampe and McIntyre see similarities and differences with the pre-1944 period. Bulgaria increased its share of total European export value, according to Lampe, "more rapidly before and since the First World War than any other country." That share tripled between 1890 and 1910 and quadrupled between 1910 and 1970 to reach 1.2 percent—a share approached only by the Scandinavian countries. Thus, "within a spectrum of generally rapid growth for national product and exports across the [European] continent, Bulgarian rates of growth have been the highest of all" (Lampe, p. 14).

Bulgaria's foreign trade was oriented toward Germany in the interwar period, although Bulgaria had difficulty in selling its manufactures on the German market. After World War II, the country's foreign trade was reoriented toward the Soviet Union and the East European countries. Access to this new market "undoubtedly aided postwar industry as [did] Soviet supplies to Bulgaria of oil, iron ore, cotton and other raw materials" (Lampe, p. 225). Trade expanded considerably, and by 1984, the total trade turnover (the sum of exports and imports) reached 100 percent of national income, that is, it matched the value of the net material product. Foreign trade, therefore was "obviously growing more rapidly than the economy was as a whole," meaning that economic growth was "export-led" (Lampe, p. 14).

The economic benefit Bulgaria derived from its association with the Soviet Union and the other East European countries is recognized by other scholars as well. In his recent book on Eastern Europe, Joseph Rothschild states that "Communist Bulgaria's sustained allegiance to the Soviet Union reflected a real complementarity of economic interests and developmental strategies," and that the country's "symbiotic integration" into the Eastern bloc "enabled Bulgaria to maintain the best long-term economic growth rate" of all the East European countries.[8]

[8]Joseph Rothschild, *Return to Diversity: A Political History of East Central Europe Since World War II*, New York and Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1989, pp. 212, 215.



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Yet, Bulgaria's trade and joint investments with Western countries have also been increasing steadily, especially during the last two decades, and are now are expected to expand considerably more. Economic relations with the West contributed to improvements in the standard of living and generated structural changes in the economy. Although the socio-political impact of these relations cannot as yet be reliably assessed, it was certainly considerable.

Notwithstanding all the blunders that are associated with a command economy, most experts agree that Bulgaria's achievements, at least until the mid-1980's, were spectacular. For example, economic historian Derek Aldcroft, the editor of Lampe's book, wrote that Bulgaria "has been one of the great success stories of the twentieth century, with the highest rate of economic growth in Europe and a degree of structural change second to none" (p. 8). Lampe, citing the calculations made by economic historian Paul Bairoch, agrees that Bulgaria's national product grew by an average of 4.4 percent a year throughout the entire period 1913–73, a rate that was "the highest among all European countries" (whose average was 3 percent). The development of the economy for the period 1950–73 was 7.2 percent per year, compared to the European average of 5.6 percent.

Today, the Bulgarian economy, notwithstanding its progress, faces numerous problems. Demographic changes have affected the country's socio-economic development. Population growth declined from 1.5 percent in 1939 to a mere 0.3 percent in 1981. Some measures have been taken to reverse this trend, but Bulgarians are concerned about what will happen in the future. As important, by the mid-1980's, the pressing needs and problems created by the scarcity of both labor and capital, "which plagued the growth of prewar Bulgarian economy," had again returned (Lampe, p. 230).

Space does not permit a discussion of the present economic, political, and social problems facing Bulgaria. However, it has become apparent that the Bulgarian economy is in a deep crisis. The causes are to be found in the policies pursued by the Zhivkov regime as well as in the rapid changes that have taken place in recent months. The slow growth of the economy in the 1980's coupled with severe droughts and energy shortages have contributed to the acute shortage of consumer goods, including such basic foodstuffs as cheese, cooking oil, sugar, and coffee. The sharp decrease in production of consumer goods and the poor distribution system have caused a shocking decline of living standards. While consumer-goods production has slumped, inflation has also increased rapidly. The domestic deficit has risen to US$1.5 billion, and hard-currency indebtedness has jumped to a remarkable $10.3 billion.[9]

AS THE works under review show, Bulgaria's economy, society, and culture have changed radically since 1950 or even 1980. The drive for economic development and modernization has been a leitmotif not only for the Communists but for Bulgarian society as a whole. It is my belief that most Bulgarians saw this drive for economic modernization as a way to increase living standards and, in part, as a means to increase national wealth and thereby affirm and strengthen the Bulgarian national identity. By making Bulgaria a more prosperous and stronger country, the nation was able to overcome some of its inferiority complexes, whose source can be traced to the country's economic and cultural backwardness. However, the Communist hierarchy, with its command-administrative methods of running the economy, failed to produce the kind of society it promised, thus causing much disenchantment and alienation from the regime. In addition, Stalinism, which was imposed on the country, destroyed for many Bulgarians the vision of socialism as a just and equitable system, while for others it meant suffering and death.

Since the mid-1980's and especially since the fall of 1989, the Communists have attempted to redefine the objectives of national economic policy and redirect economic policy in such a way as to satisfy popular demands for an improvement in living standards, as well as to enable the Bulgarian economy to hold its own in the global market. But, as recent developments demonstrate, Bulgarians have taken matters into their own hands, and a new era—characterized by demands for radical systemic change—has commenced. The source of most of these demands for change lies in the transformations Bulgaria has experienced over the past 40 years. Socio-economic changes brought the rise of an educated citizenry and the appearance of professional groups and a sophisticated intelligentsia. Thanks to the communications revolution, they were able to inform themselves about worldwide developments. The increasing numbers of professionals working in research institutes, the humanities, and the arts signaled the arrival of people who were better qualified to run the country than the

[9]David Frailamb, "Bulgarian Economy on the Ropes: Bankers Skeptical of Sofia's Reform Pledges," *Institutional Investor IMF/World Bank Daily* (Washington, DC), Sept. 25, 1990, p. 25.



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*apparatchiks* in the Communist party. The challenge to the power of the party came from intellectuals and professionals who felt left out of the decision-making process. The transformation in the attitude of these groups toward state power probably began in the late 1960's with the onset of East-West détente, and then picked up speed during the relative prosperity of the 1970's. The Gorbachev phenomenon reinforced the process, as Bulgarians joined the other East Europeans in the peaceful revolutions of late 1989.

Although the era of Bulgaria's domination by a monolithic Leninist party is now over, an objective appraisal of the last 40 years will require additional historical and comparative perspective. At present, it is tempting to see everything that has taken place since 1944 in either black or white terms. However, Bulgarian developments, as the works under review show, have been multicolored. Therefore, the search for a more lasting judgment has to be found in an approach that permits comparison of what has happened in Bulgaria with what occurred in countries that began their drive to modernize at a similar socio-economic starting point. Viewed in light of its own past, on the one hand, and compared with other East European countries, on the other, Bulgaria's accomplishments in this century are arguably a creditable achievement.

Bulgaria's transformation from an agrarian to an industrial state and its successes in education, science, literature, and the arts have prepared the ground for the building of a functioning democratic society. Democratic forces have forced the old elite to institute a new set of rules and a new institutional framework. But the ultimate test for the democratic movement in Bulgarian society is whether there will be popular acceptance of electoral results in a transition to a multiparty system, a democratic parliamentary government, and the rule of law. Acceptance of these principles could initiate a new *vuzrazhdane,* whose aim is the regeneration of Bulgaria and the creation of a free, just, and democratic nation.



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# The Chinese Party-State

**Brantly Womack**

LASZLO LADANY. *The Communist Party of China and Marxism, 1921–1985: A Self-Portrait.* Stanford, CA, Hoover Institution Press, 1988.

LOWELL DITTMER. *China's Continuous Revolution: The Post-Liberation Epoch, 1949–1981.* Berkeley, CA, University of California Press, 1987.

HONG YUNG LEE. *From Revolutionary Cadres to Party Technocrats in Socialist China.* Berkeley, CA, University of California Press, 1990.

THE Chinese party-state, like its current leadership, is in the late evening of a long and familiar phase of its existence. The passing of the old guard and the working out of the consequences of the June 4, 1989, massacre in Beijing will inevitably have major consequences for the structure of state power. Whether or not the regime moves toward the more normal authoritarian concerns of the maintenance of power and order or again pursues structural reform, its revolutionary vanguard mission will be over. Nevertheless, whatever regime does emerge will be the immediate political heir of the party-state. In addition, the party-state will continue to be influential as the framework in which a new and different politics takes place.

Because of the importance and pervasiveness of the Chinese party-state, every work on Chinese society and politics published after 1949 addresses some aspect of it. Yet, few attempt a comprehensive portrait. This essay will first review three works that present different perspectives on various dimensions of PRC politics. The body of the essay will then go beyond the books under review and attempt to sketch the general and characteristic features of the Chinese Communist party-state.

THE first work under review, Laszlo Ladany's *The Communist Party of China and Marxism, 1921–1985: A Self-Portrait,* represents the long-familiar perspective of anti-communist China-watching in which the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is viewed as dedicated to an ideologically-motivated drive for power—"totalitarian" in the full, 1950's sense of the word. Ladany founded the Hong Kong newsletter *China News Analysis* (*CNA*) in 1953, and retired from it in 1983. Most of the book (300 of 500 pages) is derived and updated from earlier *CNA* material. As a result, the narration from 1953 onward has a contemporary vividness but lacks overarching cohesion. This part of the book would be confusing to the neophyte, but anyone with a grasp of the overall development of Chinese politics would be reminded of many interesting facts and untidy bits of history that have in the meantime slipped into the background. Unfortunately, the first part of the work, in which Ladany covers the pre-1953 (and therefore the pre-*CNA*) development of the party, is so dogmatically idiosyncratic in its views and spotty in its research and coverage that it is worthless to all but the most patient and informed readers.

The utility of the totalitarian model is that it is extremely attentive to variations in the regime's orthodoxy and ritual. This attention is an antidote to the usual lack of concern

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with regime orthodoxy in the West, and is most useful in following the leftist phase of Chinese politics from 1957 to 1976, when politics was driven by ideology and when, in any case, not much unofficial information was available. The totalitarian model became less useful beginning in the late 1970's, when the voice of orthodoxy became less decisive and less coherent. Ladany's account of the 1980's is derailed by his focus on orthodoxy, and he fails to notice the more pragmatic roots and strengths of reformist trends. On the other hand, Ladany's approach is well-positioned for comprehending the atavistic politics and assumptions of the veteran revolutionaries who returned in 1989 to straighten things out.

A very interesting feature of Ladany's approach is that, for all its alertness to the details of orthodoxy, it assumes that the party-state's purpose, direction, and drive to domination are transparent —implicit in its commitment to Marxism-Leninism.[1] This problem is obvious in the subtitle of Ladany's book: "A Self-Portrait." One can attempt the self-portrait of another only on the assumption that the "other" is transparent. Indeed, Ladany does deliver a self-portrait—his own—one of an alert, viscerally anti-communist observer, who has been shaped by a lifetime of watching his enemy rather than knowing him, and is as out of touch with current Chinese politics as the "veteran proletarian revolutionary" Wang Zhen.

IN CONTRAST to Ladany's work, Lowell Dittmer's *China's Continuous Revolution: The Post-Liberation Epoch, 1949–1981* concentrates on the "mind" of Chinese communism rather than on the mouth of orthodoxy. Dittmer structures his work around an analytic formula that divides revolution into three "fundamental requisites": charismatic leadership, an illegitimate authority structure, and mass mobilization. He focuses on understanding the political intentions of the center and the way these intentions changed over time. The book is a fine overview of the general direction of Chinese politics, and it contains the best discussion that I have yet seen of the late Cultural Revolution period (1969–76). The analysis is also very sensitive to the dilemmas faced by the center and to the intellectual personalities of the actors. A good example of the insightful observations peppering the book is Dittmer's differentiation of Lin Biao's "barracks communism," with its emphasis on egalitarian asceticism and unquestioning obedience, from the critical leftism of Cultural Revolution radicals and the Gang of Four, which emphasized the critique of the party establishment.

The strength of Dittmer's approach lies in highlighting and analyzing the inherent rationale for the strategic shifts in Chinese politics. He emphasizes that the post-Mao era represents a historic watershed, as the regime moved from revolutionary to post-revolutionary politics, but he is sensitive to the contradictions of the new period. Dittmer points out that the charisma of earlier times has been routinized in the 1980's into an appreciation for the regime's post-1949 achievements and hence a neo-traditionalism based on seniority—full of pride and prejudice, but having no sense of mission.

IN A political environment as changeable as China's, the politics of the center attracts the greatest attention. Clearly, however, uncomfortable assumptions are involved in equating the party-state with its center. The center decides and the subordinates do not oppose, but this does not mean that the center can be either completely arbitrary or completely effective. Indeed, the problems of the party-state as an operational structure are among the most serious, persistent, and divisive issues with which the center must deal.

Hitherto, the problems of cadre recruitment and discipline have usually been treated from the perspective of the center. By contrast, Hong Yung Lee's *From Revolutionary Cadres to Party Technocrats in Socialist China* opens up a new perspective on the "body" of the party-state in the interaction with its "mind." This work provides an unusually well-researched and comprehensive overview of the personnel and politics of the Chinese cadre system. The treatment begins with party recruitment in the 1920's, but Lee's primary interest is the contemporary period, so the developments from the Cultural Revolution to the present receive special attention. One could argue that the book is an amalgam of two overlapping projects, the first being a chronological study of cadres development and cadres policy, and the second an analysis of the present context of cadre policy reform. As with his earlier book on the Cultural Revolution,[2] Lee's massive research, which is quantitative but not

[1] In his time, Karl Wittfogel marshaled his considerable knowledge of orthodoxy in order to discourage scholars from taking Mao Zedong seriously as an independent political thinker. He was rebutted by Benjamin Schwartz, Stuart Schram, and eventually by Mao himself. See Karl Wittfogel, "The Legend of 'Maoism'," *The China Quarterly* (London), January-March and May-June 1960, pp. 72–86 and pp. 16–34 respectively; and Benjamin Schwartz, "The Legend of the 'Legend of Maoism'," ibid., April-June 1960, pp. 35–42. Stuart Schram's *The Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung* (New York, Praeger, 1963) made Wittfogel's position untenable.

[2] Hong Yung Lee, *The Politics of the Cultural Revolution*, Berkeley, CA, University of California Press, 1978.



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oppressively statistical, has clearly advanced the understanding of the subject.

In an ideal Weberian organization, the problem of personnel is at most a homogeneous viscosity impeding the upward flow of information and the downward flow of policy. Lee argues that China differs radically from the Weberian model in two respects. First, the vast changes in the fortunes of the revolution and in cadre policy have produced very distinctive cohorts of cadres, and hence at any one time the bureaucracy is composed of very different strata. The earliest cohorts were intellectuals and workers, but the overwhelming majority of those recruited from 1928 to 1949 were peasants. The capacities and interests of each of these cohorts were distinctive, and mass mobilizational policies like the Great Leap Forward were more congenial to the peasant cohort than policies requiring specialists and bureaucratically controlled development. Such generational differences were further complicated by the Cultural Revolution, which clearly set its instigators, beneficiaries, and victims against one another.

A second unique characteristic of officialdom in China is its low level of institutionalization. The Chinese cadre is neither bound nor protected by the regulations and professionalism that define the Weberian ideal-type official. Lee convincingly argues that this implies much greater personal discretion for cadres, and therefore their individual idiosyncracies and relationships play a correspondingly larger role in decision making.

It is obvious from Lee's account that the cadre body of the party-state does not control its central mind, but it is equally obvious that the interests, habits, and skills of the body influence the content of central policy, along with such considerations as available resources and perceived crises. Therefore, every attempt at a major policy shift includes a major shift in cadre policy. But the mind is more agile than the body, and each new leadership must cope with a heterogeneous and ill-defined body of cadres, the top and bottom of which were recruited by the proponents of the now discredited policy line.

As the title of Lee's book suggests, the post-Mao era has seen a major shift from the recruitment of revolutionaries to the recruitment of technocrats. The work thus documents the great cycle in the Chinese party-state from revolutionary innovation in 1949 to obsolescence in the 1980's. (Dittmer describes the same cycle from a more analytical perspective.) If revolution is renewal from below, then Mao's China was uniquely revolutionary.[3] Not only was the cadre corps a new elite, but new structures of power were created and policy was driven by a future-oriented ideology. The Cultural Revolution was not inevitable, but from this perspective it does appear to represent the pursuit of this revolutionary logic to the point of self-destruction.

By contrast, the post-Mao era has indeed been a post-revolutionary era. In the 1980's, the oldest cohort approved and enforced policies tending toward institutionalization, decentralization, and a greater role for technocratic expertise. Society obtained greater autonomy as well. Concerns about the future communist society were postponed until 2050. The conservative return of 1989 reacted to the consequences of these developments, but conservatives do not have the energy, capacity, or time to reverse the tide. They are the deathmask of the party-state, the revolutionary vanguard turned rearguard.

INASMUCH as the books under review do not attempt a comprehensive description of the anatomy of the Chinese party-state, what follows is an attempt to present just such an account. Readers will notice that parts of the sketch are indebted to insights from a broad range of China specialists as well as to the books under review. However, I have refrained from any discussion of the relationship of the sketch to the existing literature because the subject is so complex and the literature so vast.

Of course, Chinese politics is not as static as this anatomy suggests.[4] Moreover, the Chinese party-state clearly shares many features with other party-states. It also differs from other party-states in important respects. However, a comparative perspective is not taken as the leading thread of this description because of the complexity of such an effort. The task here is simply to try to organize the essential features that have given Chinese politics its special character over the past 40 years.

The first key aspect of China's party-state—its historical dynamic

[3]The uniqueness of the Chinese accomplishment can be seen by contrasting Lee's description of the revolutionary cadre with the following statement by Gabriel Almond: "... one of the most powerful findings to come out of the political science literature of the post–World War II era—in interest group studies and survey research, replicated over and over again—is that political elites, organizational leaders, members, political activists, and political participants are drawn substantially from the higher socio-economic strata, whatever the country or ideological system." Gabriel Almond, "Corporatism, Pluralism, and Professional Memory," *World Politics* (Princeton, NJ), January 1983, p. 253.

[4]The best essay on the historical development of Chinese politics in the 20th century is Tang Tsou's "Reflections on the Formation and Foundations of the Communist Party-State in China" in Tang Tsou, *The Cultural Revolution and Post-Mao Reforms*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1986, pp. 259–334.



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—includes two quite different features. One is the revolutionary heritage of the party-state from 22 years of rural revolution and governance of base areas. It is difficult to overestimate the importance of the revolutionary experience for PRC politics, and yet the post-1949 political situation was necessarily different. Many of the basic tensions of PRC politics developed in the unacknowledged gap between the revolutionary heritage and the new situational pressures of governing a complex society. Revolutionary orthodoxy, the second feature of the party-state's history, is historical primarily because of its orientation toward future transformation. Such future-oriented rationalism was officially the foundation of Chinese orthodoxy until Zhao Ziyang's speech at the 13th Party Congress in 1987,[5] although it had ceased to provide practical policy direction since the death of Mao in 1976.

The second aspect, structure, describes the party-state's penetration of society and includes three major subdivisions. The first, unrestricted authority, describes the party-state's constitutional (or, more precisely, anti-constitutional) characteristics. Cadre politics involves the personal responsibility and authority of cadres. Societal bonding explores the linkage between the party-state and societal interests.

The final aspect, context and responsiveness, first considers the ecological constraints on the party-state. Since constraints such as resources and the international environment open up even broader areas of possible discussion, only their taxonomy can be presented here. Under the rubric of responsiveness, I attempt to examine the party-state's attempts at political change.

THE most important contribution of the prerevolutionary period to the structure of power in the PRC was the overcoming, not just of the Guomindang, but of the "total crisis" —China's disunity, confusion, and vulnerability to foreign powers. Since chaos was the primary enemy, the primary task of the revolutionary party was the creation of a new power at the village level. The task of building the party/state/army power structure was supplemented by the task of the co-optation of societal forces through united-front tactics, and the power structure was tested by combat with warlord, Guomindang, and Japanese forces in guerrilla warfare.

The leadership structure of the base areas was integrated in the sense that military, economic, and political functions were combined. The command structure was based on comprehensive leadership at each level, and facilitated a political process based on broadly targeted mass campaigns. The campaign rhythm required cycles in which enthusiasm was followed by reassessment and consolidation. Thus, at the initial phase of the cycle, cadres were encouraged to be bold, and at the end they were held accountable for poor results or for deviations from what became defined as the correct path. Clearly this kind of revolutionary authority structure is as different from the Weberian bureaucratic model as a guerrilla army is from the Prussian army.

The primary resource of the Chinese revolution was popular mobilization. In confronting a government that had far more extensive resources in every other respect, the party depended on popular support for survival and eventually for victory. Therefore, the party had to remain close to the masses, and its policies had to address the concrete needs of the masses. With victory, the party established a monopoly of state power and the masses lost their clout, although the politics of the base areas became a nostalgic model for the PRC.

The politics of the party-state is oriented by an organizationally-enforced revolutionary orthodoxy that defines the current political situation, promises the possibility of a transformed future, and prescribes a program of action. One of the earliest and most durable contributions of Marxism-Leninism to Chinese politics was the notion of class struggle, which not only drew the line between friends and enemies but also defined politics as irreconcilable conflict. In 1957, Mao Zedong modified the notion of class struggle by introducing the idea of "contradictions among the people," and modified it again during the Cultural Revolution by detaching class identity from any relationship to the means of production.

Belief in a transformed future has been as important in Chinese Communist Party orthodoxy as class struggle. Historical materialism established a series of strategic goals: revolutionary victory, socialist transformation, and eventually communism. Each goal promised a threshold of achievement so rewarding as to justify any sacrifice. The party's knowledge of and dedication to these goals legitimated its vanguard role. By basing its legitimacy on a transcendent future, the party-state resembles a theocratic church-state. Zhao Ziyang's declaration at the 13th Party Congress that China would be in the primary stage of building socialism for 100 years was intended to push the future so far forward as to make orthodox vanguardism untenable. Indeed, the conservative restoration

[5] In his speech, Zhao described China as being only in the "primary stage of socialism" and maintained that China would be in that stage for the next 100 years. Cited in Michel Oksenberg, "China's 13th Party Congress," *Problems of Communism* (Washington, DC), November-December 1987, p. 12.



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of 1989 was a rearguard action, intending to defend the established prerogatives of the party-state against deterioration and challenge, but without the reestablishment of a legitimating mission.

Another aspect of revolutionary orthodoxy is that it sanctions some programs and methods and precludes others. Such policy prejudices can be useful when they are appropriate to the concrete situation, and are disastrous when they are not. Mao's own problems with dogmatic prescription led him to emphasize the role of practice and learning from experience. Nevertheless, he adopted the Soviet model of socialist transformation, and then led China into the most dogmatically driven politics of any communist country. The 1978 campaign for the slogan "practice is the sole criterion for determining truth" was aimed at removing the dead hand of Maoist orthodoxy, although the "four [cardinal] principles that must be upheld" soon replaced it.[6]

Finally, we should consider the peculiar character of subsistence socialism in the Chinese party-state. Subsistence socialism is articulated as faithful to Marxism-Leninism and the Stalinist model of national economic development, but it is deeply influenced by the rural revolutionary experience. Subsistence socialism is oriented toward communal survival by means of, first, the distribution of existing resources, and second, collective effort. Egalitarianism is the prime value because it is assumed that resources are extremely scarce. This approach has two major effects on the administration of Chinese society by the party-state. First, each unit is structured so as to provide as much as possible for all the needs of its members. This is called "work unit (*danwei*) socialism," and it is carried to a greater extreme than in most communist countries. Second, decentralization tends to be oriented toward unit self-sufficiency. Each unit engages in "import substitution," trying to be "small but complete," rather than in "commercial specialization." Subsistence socialism desires modernization and wealth, but only *after* survival needs are met and on the basis of *collective* action and enjoyment. Economic trends in the 1980's, including inflation, market-oriented decentralization, and encouraging individual families to "get rich first," run contrary to the values and institutions of subsistence socialism by putting speed of economic growth ahead of communal subsistence.

FEW regimes have been more revolutionary than the People's Republic of China, and a revolutionary regime finds it a joyful necessity to create a new political structure having unrestricted public authority on the ruins of the old. In turn, three forces converged to push totalism to its limit in China: Marxist-Leninist rationalism, the authoritarian traditions of China, and the preceding situation of total crisis.

The most basic principle of totalism is its assumption of unity and solidarity between the people and the leadership. The assumption can motivate people to accomplishments, but it precludes any effective limit on public power or on the agents of public power, because such restrictions would implicitly undermine the assumption of unity. The state does not tolerate independent social, political, or economic powers and does not acknowledge a capacity for excess. Although the regime does acknowledge that the party and its cadres make mistakes, only the party can correct them, and only an enemy of the people would use mistakes to justify limits on the party-state. The excesses of the Cultural Revolution led to systemic critiques of unrestricted power, and the decentralizing policies of the 1980's led in fact to the emergence of more autonomous societal forces, but not to a new orthodoxy.

It is important to note that the relationship between the party-state and the people is not founded on a social contract in the Western sense. In contrast to Thomas Hobbes's simple contract against chaos, the party-state promises a transformed future, without exploitation or want. In contrast to John Locke's contract to preserve property, the regime is founded on the redistribution of property, although this redistribution is coupled with the promise of collective security and prosperity. In contrast to Jean Jacques Rousseau's contract to participate in the general will, the party-state assumes a vanguard role. The values of economic security, prosperity, and political participation are incorporated into the values of the party-state, but they are concrete problems for the party and the people to face together, and are not subject to constitutional bargaining. Constitutions and laws are based on the assumption of unity, and therefore useless as weapons of individual appeals against state tyranny.

In one important respect all states are based on military models, because they are all premised on the center's force and its control over a given territory. To the extent that the population is assumed to be friendly, the sheath is more prominent than the sword. But the guerrilla military model on which the Chinese party-state is based is very different from the professional mili-

[6]The four cardinal principles are: keeping to the socialist road, upholding the people's democratic dictatorship, leadership by the party, and Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought.



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tary model of the West. Since security in the guerrilla military model is primarily a question of popular support rather than of conventional military superiority, any political force perceived as basing itself on "elements of classes different from our own" (*jieji yiji fenzi*), challenging the premise of solidarity, or derailing the mission of the regime becomes a mortal threat. The most characteristic response to such threats is popular struggle organized and coordinated by the party-state. The June 4, 1989, massacre demonstrated the final breakdown of this system, as the military was employed against the masses, who were challenging the party-state. As Deng Xiaoping suggested when he explained in his June 9, 1989, speech that other states did likewise without being condemned, China has now slid into a normal authoritarianism.

The presence of an overriding historical mission means that politics is in command in the party-state. The vanguard must lead; to wait for the people would be "tailist." Thus, in fact, the "party-state" is a not a hyphenated dual entity but a party empowered and encumbered by state power and responsibility. The party gradually arrogated all power from state organs in the 1950's, and reasserted its control after the fall of Lin Biao. Efforts were undertaken in the 1980's to separate party and state, but they were half-hearted because parts of the state were not to remain indifferent to the party's political leadership. A poignant vignette of this dilemma can be seen in the new *nomenklatura* rules for elected positions. Of course, the distinction between politics and administration is somewhat artificial in any modern state, but, in contrast to the West, in the Chinese case this distinction has not been regarded as legitimate.

A state as large as China cannot be homogeneous, but China's approach to the parceling out of governmental responsibilities demonstrates an impressive commitment to unity. It is significant that *all* levels below the center are referred to as "local" (*difang*). A given level of the bureaucracy is not responsible to a given constituency but to the next highest level of the bureaucracy. Local units have no rights against the center. Nevertheless, the centralization of power at each level of the system and the tendency of leaders to remain in place means that, unless intervention from above occurs, local leadership is very powerful. Without changing the formal nature of the relationship, the process of decentralization in the 1980's has further weakened the center's capacity to dominate.

The low level of institutionalization and specialization in China puts a tremendous weight on cadre politics in general and on the personal behavior of cadres in particular. Mao once said that cadres should act like general commanders, meaning that bold action is preferable to following directives blindly. However, the use of such ambiguous criteria as "correct attitude" in selecting cadres for positions, in conjunction with the power of leading cadres and the unforeseeable directions of future campaigns, more commonly has led to very cautious policy stances on the part of cadres and the energetic cultivation of personal ties with superiors and subordinates in the hierarchy.

The low level of institutionalization also puts a premium on the need for access to leading cadres. To some extent, access itself is institutionalized; for instance, every member of the Politburo is collaterally the leader of a major central organization, thereby establishing the access of personnel in these organs to the "center" of the center. Participation in party congresses, people's congresses, and political consultative conferences is probably most valuable for the access to leading cadres that takes place "behind the scenes" at such meetings. Needless to say, access can also be established through relatives, friends, and colleagues. Those without the privilege of personal access to leading cadres, or in need of contacting an unfamiliar official, often try to use connections (*guanxi*) to establish access. Hence, the building of networks of connections and the trade in access are important dimensions of politics in China. It might be only a slight exaggeration to say that only those who do not know where they are going enter a public office by the front door.

Such personalistic politics puts the masses in the position of petitioners vis-à-vis officials. In theory, the party-state serves the masses, and this service does entail important commitments to mass welfare. But as individuals, the masses are dependent on the cadres' personal political style, and citizen rights are in fact nonexistent. In the worst case, where the leadership is hostile to an individual, there is nothing to be done but to wait until the fury passes. In the case of a large-scale action condemned by the leadership, most participants are usually exonerated (after re-education) because they are seen to have been misled, while the ringleaders are isolated and punished.

Perhaps the most serious error of the totalitarian model is that it assumes that the party-state remains uninfluenced by the society it leads. In fact, through the party's system of branches reaching into every locality and workplace, encouraging activism, and virtually monopolizing the avenues of political influence, the party-state tends to become what Gaetano Mosca called "the political class"—that broad and



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varied minority in a society that is actually interested and energetic enough to participate in public affairs. To be sure, class-based recruitment, party orthodoxy, the power of the established party elite at each level, and party discipline constrict the range of participating people and ideas. On the other hand, the party's preference for recruitment from the working class and emphasis on activism rather than wealth or family connections has broadened its representative capacity as a political class in comparison to non-communist countries. In any case, it is to be expected that some bonding with society takes place, as new societal ferments and interests express themselves within the party. An impressive case of such bonding was the similarity in viewpoints between the Democracy Wall activists of 1978–80 and Deng Xiaoping's more progressive advisers. But the party's credibility as a catchment for progressive activism and new societal interests was hurt by the removal of Hu Yaobang in 1987 and perhaps fatally damaged by the massacre on June 4, 1989.

In addition to the party's tendency to incorporate representatives of all classes and strata in its membership, the party-state also makes a conscious effort to acknowledge the functional contribution of various strata and groups and to incorporate their leaderships into its consultative structure. The Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) is the archetype of such corporatism. It evolved from the various groups and political parties that cooperated with the CCP before victory, and its membership is explicitly allocated among political and societal luminaries. The CPPCC was entrusted with writing the 1954 Constitution, disappeared during the Cultural Revolution, and has prospered in the post-Mao period as a shadow people's congress, meeting at the same time and with virtually the same prerogatives and access to leading cadres. Similarities to the people's congress do not demonstrate the political power of the CPPCC but rather the fact that the people's congresses are also a form of consultative assembly—one based on geography and work units rather than allocations to various societal groups.

Because the party-state has created the structures of PRC society, corporatism in China is not based on bargaining between the state and powerful, autonomous groups. Rather it represents an acknowledgement by the party-state that such groups make a functional contribution. Therefore, the language and politics of corporatism in China are based on emphasizing the useful contributions of the group in question and (usually) its need for further resources, rather than cooptation of such groups to prevent them from using their monopoly over scarce resources to challenge the state.

A last feature of societal bonding is the complexity of the party's own organizational interest. Lee analyzes the different interests of various cohorts of cadres; it could be added that inevitable differences of interest are present among cadres at the central, intermediate, and basic levels, and that promotion by seniority compounds and amplifies group and positional viewpoints. A key conflict in party policy often occurs between the interests of the center in new, flashy policy initiatives and the prior commitments at other levels to established policy or simply to noninterference by the center. Thus, it is wrong simply to juxtapose the party-state to society; collaboration and/or tensions occur among interests that breach the lines between the party-state on the one hand and society on the other.

EVEN if the party-state is all-powerful politically, it must operate within a given context of opportunities and resources. One of the most fundamental and difficult determinants is the effect of cultural and ideological assumptions. The influence of traditional Chinese culture is neither easily proven nor denied, because it concerns a prior commitment, a disposition rather than a conscious position. Moreover, the fund of digested experience and habits of thought is constantly growing. It now includes Marxism-Leninism, the experience in the base areas, and 40 years of PRC history. Politics is determined by its clichés as well as by its arguments or, perhaps more accurately, it is certainly but unclearly determined by them.

Another contextual determinant is the international environment. This is most obviously true in the effect on domestic capabilities of different constellations of foreign allies and enemies. In the 1980's, the party-state has been both empowered and constrained by its openness to the West. A more subtle constraint is that China's identity is partially defined by its international peer groups—the communist world and the Third World. Initially, its sense of its relationship to these peer groups was an important element in shaping China's sense of mission, and the Chinese leadership remains quite sensitive to world opinion. On the other hand, China's size as well as its autonomy in culture and resources give it an impressive freedom of maneuver in its international behavior.

At the other end of the geographical spectrum, the poor infrastructure presents a real obstacle to centralization. Transportation, communications, finances, and the like are among the least developed



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areas of the Chinese economy. Moreover, the push for subsistence socialism has created strong, cellular structures at the basic level that display (or camouflage) impressive capacities for collective action and evasion. Localism in China thus poses a formidable obstacle to the center's effectiveness. Decollectivization has weakened these structures, but it has not increased central control. And, as a result of the economic reforms, for the first time since the early 1950's, local forces exist outside of even the basic party-state structure.

The limitation of resources is both a constraint on current options and a motivation for modernization. Government policies significantly increased available resources, and as a result, the resource context of the party-state's policies in the 1980's is very different from what it was in the 1950's. The basic concerns of the 1950's were those of laying the groundwork for a modern economy; now, attention has shifted to efficiency within a complex economy. One pair of severe resource constraints remains, namely, the problems of population and food. They are grounded in the famous statistic that China feeds 22 percent of the world's population from 7 percent of the world's arable land. Food self-sufficiency remains a difficult problem, and China is not wealthy enough to make long-term, large-scale dependence on grain imports an attractive or prudent alternative. The organizational and distributive aspects of the grain problem seem, like the "hydraulic theories" of yore, to justify a special role for central political-economic control.

Few countries have changed their political direction as often or as dramatically as China, and yet few seem as limited by antiquated structures and ancient leaders as does today's China. Normal policy change in China is not based on the legislative model that lies at the heart of the input-output schema of political analysis. Instead, the process of identifying problems in current policy—the party-state's responsiveness—is usually secret until a new policy is adopted. The typical process of originating new policies is one of local experimentation resulting in successful models that are then further studied, copied, and generalized. Models tend to be successful examples of a particular policy rather than average cases, and the designation and promotion of models are important parts of the political process. Of course, the final policy decisions of the center are pushed without regard to local variations, but usually each level has some flexibility. As a result, current policy varies significantly across different units, with a considerable lag in implementation of centrally-sanctioned policy.

Crises are an essential part of the logic of significant policy and personnel change. Since current policy and cadre appointments are sanctified by the party-state, a major change requires the condemnation of previous policy and leadership and the exposure of an urgent necessity for change. The sanctity of the new leadership and its ideas arises from the ashes of the old. The disjunction between the new direction and the old is often considerable but may also be exaggerated, and in any case, lower levels often try to get away with re-articulating what they have been doing in the language of the new policy. Nevertheless, sudden, major policy shifts at the center are likely in conjunction with leadership changes. In the absence of electoral campaigns and promises, freshly discovered crises and vast policy initiatives help establish the identity of the new leadership. The current regime is anomalous in that it perceived a mortal crisis, blamed it on the previous leadership, and yet remains pledged to continue the previous policies.

The problem with structural reform within a party-state is that any reform that fixes constitutional restrictions on the state and its cadres necessarily challenges the assumption of the unity of the party and masses upon which the party-state is built. Mao Zedong was willing to "bombard the headquarters" during the Cultural Revolution, but his radical critique was of "party persons in power going the capitalist road," not of the party-state itself. When the party was threatened by the Cultural Revolution, Mao stopped it. Similarly, the major political reforms of the 1980's—new legal codes, competitive elections, etc.—were adopted on the assumption that they would not be used to challenge the party-state. Cadre reform was pushed on the assumption that the old guard would remain behind the scenes. In fact, however, the loss of a sense of historical mission and the impact on society of decentralization, reform, and de-ideologization have contributed to deep structural changes in the party-state despite the fact that its outward appearance remains the same as it has for 40 years. The party-state as I have described it here has been on shifting sand for a decade.

The key point of serious party-state reform is putting the presumption of unity between the party and the people to the test of freedom of discussion and electoral openness. The party-state must pass muster with the citizen-masses. This has been Mikhail Gorbachev's historic achievement in the Soviet Union, and in my judgment, progressive reformers in China, including Zhao Ziyang, might have been willing to accept that challenge. But the credibility of the party's capacity to lead reform was a victim of June 1989 massacre, and this will make de-



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mocratization by a future regime both more necessary and more costly to the party.

THE novel events of 1989, both the demonstrations and the repression, have shaken the basic structure of the Chinese party-state. Because the expected succession of leadership and policy have been destroyed by the return of the "veteran proletarian revolutionaries," the future direction of the party-state is uncertain. The only certainty is that China's revolutionary party-state cannot be revived but can serve only as the starting point for new tendencies.



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# The PCI: From Historic Compromise to Reconstitution

**Ted Perlmutter**

LEONARDO PAGGI and MASSIMO D'ANGELILLO. *I Comunisti Italiani e il riformismo: Un confronto con le social-democrazie europee* (The Italian Communists and Reformism: A Confrontation with the European Social Democracies). Turin, Einaudi, 1986.

STEPHEN HELLMAN. *Italian Communism in Transition: The Rise and Fall of the Historic Compromise in Turin, 1975–1980*. New York, Oxford University Press, 1988.

ACHILLE OCCHETTO. *Il nuovo PCI in Italia e in Europa. E il tempo dell'alternativa: Relazione al XVIII Congresso nazionale del PCI* ("The New PCI in Italy and in Europe" and "It's Time for an Alternative": Speeches to the 18th National Congress of the PCI). Rome, Editori Riuniti, 1989.

JOAN BARTH URBAN. *Moscow and the Italian Communist Party: From Togliatti to Berlinguer*. Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press. 1986.

WHY, in 1990, are we discussing the decline of the Italian Communist Party (PCI)? Surprisingly, the reasons have only in passing to do with the changes lurching through large portions of the communist world in the last year. Indeed, by the early 1980's, the PCI had successfully distanced itself from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and Eastern Europe's more repressive leaderships. Unlike the French Communist Party, it does not have to explain why its national leader had spent his vacations in the late Nicolae Ceauçescu's Romania. Foreign policy aside, there are two ways to interpret the original question. Why, given the marginalization or collapse of communist parties in other countries of Southern Europe, does there still exist in Italy a communist party that receives 25 to 30 percent of the vote? Alternately, why does a party that was on the brink of taking its seat in government 15 years ago find itself in such desperate straits that it has just decided to reconstitute itself?

On the whole, the books discussed here address the latter question. The works by Leonardo Paggi and Massimo D'Angelillo and by Stephen Hellman focus on the failure of the PCI to take proper advantage of the opportunities thrust upon it in the mid-1970's. Although necessarily upbeat—as one would expect the addresses of a PCI general secretary to a national party congress to be—Achille Occhetto's 1989 remarks are premised on the need for serious reconsideration of the party's policies and the necessities of different political alliances if the PCI is to continue to play a major role in Italian politics. Only Joan Barth Urban's book, dealing with the PCI's foreign relations, sees itself as recounting a success story.

FOR AT least the last decade, the Italian Communist Party has been regarded as the most open and successful of the European communist parties. The communist organization that emerged in Italy after World War II was not a classic Leninist party based primarily on full-time, professional cadres. Instead, it was an open, mass party, accepting all who would support the party's platform—a "new party" (*partito nuovo*). A strong effort was made to accommodate the Church and to encourage Catholics to join the party. Building on its critical role in the Resistance to German

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occupation, the party had grown from 5,000 members in the 1930's to 1.5 million members in 1945.

But there were contradictory tendencies inherent in the party's non-Leninist direction. Despite the party's mass base, it retained certain characteristics and organizational structures of a "vanguard" or a "cadre" party—for example, its democratic centralism and the total commitment demanded of its militants. The party also actively sought to be both a party of government and an opposition. As shall be seen, these contradictory structures and roles made both for its early success and for its later difficulties.

The PCI was a member of ruling government coalitions from 1945 until 1947, when the Christian Democratic (DC) party expelled the Socialists and Communists. Since then, the Communists have been permanently excluded from power. Since 1954, the DC has consistently dominated the ruling coalitions of parties formed as a result of balloting under Italy's system of proportional representation.

Although the PCI suffered a difficult period in the 1950's, it thereafter captured an ever-increasing share of the Italian electorate, rising from 19 percent in 1946 to 34 percent in 1976, when it made a serious bid for participation in government. The moment was ripe for a new strategy not just because of growing electoral support. Regardless of their intentions, the social movements of the late 1960's and early 1970's had reinvigorated the Communist party by shifting the political terrain to the left and mobilizing a new generation, many of whose members would eventually integrate themselves into the institutions of the Left. The growth of the trade unions had changed the balance of power between business and labor. The Christian Democratic party and its allies seemed in disarray. On the international scene, a variety of European communist parties seemed bent on setting a different path from Moscow's under the rubric of "Eurocommunism."

At the same time, the successful mobilization of leftist elements that started in the universities and factories in the late 1960's and spread to many other areas of Italian society had provoked a short-term political reaction. The elections of 1972 had not produced any gains for the Left as a whole, and actually moved the governing coalition to the right. Indeed, the "historic compromise" (*compromesso storico*) was a strategy born more out of a fear of the potential of this backlash than from an appreciation of the improved long-term possibilities for the Left.

The historic compromise was a policy that sought accommodation with the DC and eventually participation with it in government. Steps in this direction produced a situation where the PCI in 1976 was not a member of but supported the DC's "government of national unity." However, the arrangement broke down in January 1978 over the issue of whether the Communists were to become full-fledged coalition partners with the DC. The books by Paggi/D'Angelillo and Hellman treat precisely this period between 1976 and 1978.

In discussing the PCI's "errors" in the 1970's, these two works are complementary. Paggi and D'Angelillo explain why the core economic policy ideas underlying the historic compromise failed; Hellman shows the costs of defending such policies and accepting as allies those who had been one's enemies. Both analyses see the policies as having failed because they placed heavy burdens on the party's own constituencies without extracting meaningful concessions from the parties with which the PCI wanted to share power.

There are, however, striking differences in the political visions and strategies the authors suggest. Paggi and D'Angelillo find fault with the historic compromise because it failed to contribute toward the building of a new social democratic constituency, one that would include technical and white-collar workers; Hellman criticizes the *compromesso storico* because it emphasized acceptance of the DC and of the status quo at all costs.

PAGGI and D'Angelillo present what is essentially an ideological critique, although they do not ignore policy analysis. The authors are exceptionally well-versed in the intellectual patrimony of the PCI.[1] From their analysis of liberal and Marxist thought in Italy, they argue why a left-reformist, or "social democratic," politics has not been possible there and, in particular, did not emerge in the context of the national unity government.[2]

The authors see government-supported, national contractual relations between business and labor as the core of a social democratic policy. Such an approach, they say, is necessary for sustaining development in economies highly dependent on the international market. They regard as a prerequisite to such a political configuration the existence of a united trade union movement represented by a mass party. By 1975, Italy was approaching this situation. Its economy had always been dependent on the international market, and in the after-

[1]Paggi has written two volumes on the political theory of Antonio Gramsci: *Gramsci e il Moderno Principe* (Gramsci and the Modern Principle), Rome, Editori riuniti, 1970; and *Le Strategie del Potere in Gramsci* (The Strategy of Power in Gramsci), 1st ed., Roma, Editori riuniti, 1984.

[2]The book grows out of a larger University of Modena project of single-nation studies of social democracy in Austria, Italy, Sweden, and West Germany.



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math of the "hot autumn" of 1969, the unions had gained sufficient political unity and government recognition to represent the general interests of labor.

Yet, Paggi and D'Angelillo argue, the lack of a reform tradition in Italy ultimately caused the national unity government to fail. This failure has both a political and an intellectual component. Politically, it refers to the refusal of the Italian bourgeoisie to recognize the union and party representatives of the working class. Paggi and D'Angelillo see this politics of exclusion of the Communist party as a continuation of the mid-19th-century process of "transformism" (*trasformismo*). A term employed by Antonio Gramsci,[3] *trasformismo* referred to the co-optation of leaders of opposition worker and peasant movements away from their political bases and into the dominant, governing coalitions.

Ideologically, the failure of a social democratic reform tradition to take root in Italy stems from the sterile encounter between liberalism and the workers' movement. As Paggi and D'Angelillo point out, liberal scholars Luigi Einaudi and Vilfredo Pareto regarded state intervention in the market as disruptive, and—in the Italian context—as leading to political corruption and economic distortion. Since Einaudi was not only a theorist but also, in the late 1940's and early 1950's, the architect of Italian economic policy, his analysis had great practical import. During this period, he favored only monetarist interventions in the market. It is worth noting that during this period, American advisers suggested Keynesian interventionist policies for Italy, but were rebuffed by the Italian government.[4]

The historic exclusion of the Communist party from government not only undermined the structural conditions necessary for social democratic governance, it also circumscribed the party's ideology in ways that would make it difficult to conceive of bargaining over these issues. Before it could articulate a policy position that would broker working-class economic and political strength in return for specific policy outputs, the PCI had to expend its political and intellectual capital to be accepted by the DC and others as a legitimate part of the political system.

As a result, Paggi and D'Angelillo maintain, the only macroeconomic policy the PCI could imagine in 1976 was one of wage austerity, based on monetarist assumptions about how to restrain the high rate of inflation in Italy at the time. As the prominent Communist leader Giorgio Amendola put it: "Sacrifices are demanded by the state of things."[5] The hallmark strategy of social democracy—the trading of wage restraint for policy reform—was never successfully articulated. Issues that might have been advanced in Italy, such as full employment, economic growth, and maintenance of welfare state services, were not effectively placed on the policy agenda. It was this failure to conceptualize the political moment in terms of national-level bargaining over this range of issues that undermined the PCI's position within the national unity government.

HELLMAN uses a case study of the Turinese Federation of the PCI to illustrate the general difficulties attending the historic compromise. The primary conflict that Hellman sees is between the PCI's role as a party of government and its actions as a party of opposition. The issue to him is essentially strategic, stemming from the PCI's limited capacity to respond to the transformations occurring in Italian society during the 1970's. Of prime importance was the party's overly pessimistic, conservative adherence to the *partito nuovo* tradition, its persistence in seeing the main cleavages in Italian politics as being between Catholics and Communists, and its penchant for making the party's primary demand the recognition of the PCI as a legitimate party within the Italian political system. These factors precluded the recognition and advocacy of new demands emerging in society or the building of reform coalitions.

Turin is an extreme case, where the historic strength of the working class, the highly antagonistic relations between the unions and the automobile manufacturer FIAT, and the organizational weakness of the local PCI unit conspired to cast the local party as a party of opposition. Only with great difficulty could it imagine itself a social democratic party or assume the role of a governing party.

Hellman focuses primarily on the impact on the local organization of changes in party policy at the national level. The two most critical issues discussed are the response of the Turinese party to the national elaboration of the historic compromise, and the organizational efforts to respond to the massive changes in attitude and cadres produced by the cycle of protest that lasted from 1968 to 1976.

Hellman's intensive fieldwork provides an unusually penetrating glimpse of a political party in crisis. He vividly portrays how the Turin party organization's efforts to follow the national line of the historic compromise resulted in undercutting the very constituencies it sought to

[3]Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere/ Antonio Gramsci; a cure di Valentino Gerratana* (Prison Notebooks/Antonio Gramsci, edited by Valentino Gerratana), Edizione critica dell'Istituto Gramsci, 2nd ed., Turin, Einaudi, 1977, p. 962.

[4]Donald Sassoon, *Contemporary Italy: Politics, Economy, and Society Since 1945*, London, Longman, 1986, p. 20.

[5]Paggi/D'Angelillo, p. 11.



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mobilize. For example, to avoid offending the Christian Democrats, the Turinese party reversed its long-standing position and accepted a plan whereby neighborhood councils, previously defended by the party as grass-roots democratic movements, were to be appointed by the city council rather than elected by the populace. This policy reversal effectively undermined any potential autonomy the councils might have had and alienated many supporters of the councils, both inside and outside the PCI, who had worked for years to see that these bodies were directly elected.

Another example of the debilitating effects of policy change concerns the PCI's response to terrorism. To show that it supported the state in times of crisis, the PCI changed from an overly benign attitude toward left-wing terrorism to a "scorched earth" policy, whereby it attacked anyone concerned with upholding the rights of terrorists as virtually their accomplices. This change was offensive to numerous intellectuals who thought that, in combating terrorism, the state was engaging in repression and riding roughshod over civil rights.

Hellman's explanation of the formal organizational crisis is more difficult to grasp and summarize, reflecting, as it does, the multiplicity of difficulties confronting the party. To modernize in the 1970's, the PCI had to confront new issues and bring in new people.

But, as discussed above, for the strategic reasons implicit in the historic compromise, the party found it difficult to face new issues. The organizational ambiguities of being both a cadre party and a mass party were compounded by the specific attributes of those members of the "generation of 1968" who, by the mid-1970's, were assuming important roles in the party. A party that intends to have a coherent alternative theory of how society should function and to be present in all areas of politics, places enormous burdens on its militants by calling for a total subordination of private life to party activism. This kind of moral dedication can only be justified by a heroic, revolutionary ideal of sacrifice, that of the "professional revolutionary." However, the members of the generation of 1968 who became "cadres" in the party were resistant to both these ideas.

Hellman's research shows that the new cadres came from widely disparate political backgrounds and thus had no single core of beliefs, much less a willingness to subordinate themselves totally to party discipline. They also tended to believe, as a famous slogan of 1968 had it, that "the personal is political." This axiom emphasized that the means of politics should be as important as the ends. If politics were to create a new community, they would have to be conducted in ways that did not impoverish the lives of activists. The new cadres thus resisted a total subordination of their personal lives to the demands of the party.

As was to be expected, the politics of the historic compromise never played well in Turin. Traditional hostility toward the DC was compounded by a crisis in the automobile industry, which meant that austerity policies cut deeper in Turin than elsewhere. The contours of the resulting organizational crisis in Turin are easy to trace. Party membership declined and, more critical, the proportion of workers in the party fell from 59 percent to 44.5 percent between 1977 and 1985, leaving the share of working-class members a mere 7 percentage points above the national average for the party. These changes undermined the Turinese Federation's historic capacity to voice worker demands.

Hellman depicts an archaic PCI structure. The highly imaginative form of political organization that had emerged in the postwar era had become a straitjacket. Or, as Max Weber said of the Protestant Reformation, the "light cloak" that should rest easily on one's shoulders "became an iron cage."[6] The "rooted remnants" of militant and centralized organizational practices developed in an earlier era simply were inappropriate for Italy in the 1970's.

IN CONTRAST to its experiences in the domestic arena, the PCI was able to move with considerable dispatch in its relations with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the international communist movement. The changes in China, Eastern Europe, and the Soviet Union may have challenged one purpose of being a communist party—participation in a unified world revolutionary movement—but they have caused the PCI relatively little embarrassment. The PCI's agile maneuvering to distance itself from the CPSU meant that by the late 1980's, there was little entanglement or need to backtrack on substantive foreign policy stands.

This is not to say that the history of the PCI was not critically influenced by its experience within the Communist International. Indeed, one of the more salient contributions of Joan Urban's book is to show how the period of the 1920's and 1930's shaped the strategies of Palmiro Togliatti and other leaders in the post–World War II era. Togliatti was the only leader of a West European communist party who was not appointed by Stalin. His experience during the interwar years was one of constant struggle with Stalin and

[6]Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958, p. 181.



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other Comintern leaders who attempted to control the Italian Communist Party. His revulsion at the Stalinist experience and his resentment against Stalin's attacks on the weakness of the PCI reinforced the tendencies to build an open party, one that would be present in all areas of Italian society, thereby guaranteeing the party's immunity to Soviet domination.

Throughout the postwar era, the Italian party took increasingly independent stands vis-à-vis the Soviet Union and encouraged pluralism within the international communist movement. Initially, the PCI's policies were ambiguous and tentative, as seen in 1956, when it responded favorably to de-Stalinization in the USSR and yet defended the Soviet invasion of Hungary. Over time, the party's policies became more forthright and independent. In the 1960's, the PCI defended pluralistic politics within the movement in order to ensure itself the space to develop its own autonomous policies. By the mid-1970's, the goals were far grander, as the party played a critical role in the development of a "Eurocommunist" ideology. Eurocommunism—an international movement made up primarily of the French, Spanish, and Italian parties—sought to develop a serious alternative to the world communist movement's Moscow-centered ideology in general, and to articulate an alternative path for communist politics in Western Europe in particular.

During the historic compromise, both the PCI and the CPSU downplayed the severity of the break between the two parties. Although Italian moves toward autonomy did not incur favor in Moscow, Soviet criticism of the PCI was muted. The domestic strength of the Italian party made it the most successful of the European communist movements and left the CPSU reluctant to attack it. Although the PCI distanced itself from Moscow for reasons of domestic Italian politics, as well as its own beliefs about how European communism should develop, it was reluctant to engage in public confrontation. This was because an outright break with the Soviet Union would have fueled the fires of defiance among the PCI's more orthodox members, already distressed by the *compromesso storico*.

After the historic compromise failed, there was little to restrain the latent tensions between the PCI and the CPSU. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 provoked strong criticism from the Italians, and the Soviet support for martial law in Poland in 1981 caused such a break in relations between the two parties that the Italians sought, in Urban's words, "disengagement from, not autonomy within, the Moscow-centered communist movement" (p. 349). In the aftermath of the events in Poland, PCI Secretary General Enrico Berlinguer claimed that the October Revolution no longer had any "propulsive force" (p. 316). The Soviets responded with equally heated counterclaims, and the "rip" (*strappo*) in Soviet-PCI relations became irrevocable. The events of the 1980's did nothing to move the Italians closer to the Soviet comrades.

Urban's historical reconstruction is based on internal party documents in both Italy and the Soviet Union. This explicit reliance on primary documents makes transparent the process by which she arrives at her conclusions, but it also makes for hard reading, as one learns perhaps more than one wants to know about the ins and outs concerning every strategic turn. But, by recounting the story in this way, she makes a convincing case for both the gravity of the divisions within the international communist movement and the effects that the origins of the PCI had on the development of its domestic and foreign policies. Although links with the CPSU had not been a major detriment to the PCI's political fortunes at home, the ultimate break doubtless improved its electoral prospects.

AFTER the national unity government failed in January 1978, the Christian Democrats came back into power in charge of a five-party coalition (*pentapartito*) that gave a greater role than previously to the Socialists. Under the leadership of Bettino Craxi, the Socialist Party sought to change the politics of the Left in the same way that the French Socialist Party had overtaken the French Communist Party. Although the Socialist Party's success at the polls has yet to match its claims, its share of the vote increased from 9.6 percent in 1976 to 14.3 percent in 1987. In the same period, the Communist party's electoral base had eroded to the point of negating the upsurge that followed 1968. Particularly worrisome to the PCI was its lack of appeal to the young and to the expanding technical and professional strata. The Socialists' sharp anti-communist rhetoric and actions also limited the PCI's room for maneuver.

These electoral and political developments provide the background for Occhetto's two speeches to the 18th PCI Congress in 1989, which are printed in the fourth of the volumes under review here. Of the two speeches, the first, entitled "The New PCI in Italy and in Europe," addresses Italy's place in the world; the second, entitled "It's Time for an Alternative," addresses domestic politics. Both criticize the encroachment of the market onto the domain of the state, calling instead for more innovative use of governmental authority.

The foreign policy document calls for a path between "capitalist individualism" and "bureaucratic



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collectivism." Regarding the politics of Europe, it calls for strong democratic controls and a firm affirmation of a broad range of citizens' rights with respect to education, information, health care, union representation, and equal opportunity. It is a politics that looks forward to a united, democratically governed Europe, one in which governmental power will be used to raise the living standards of citizens—in short, it advocates a "European Road to Socialism." To these ends, it calls for a coalition of all socialist forces, including the PCI, within the European Community.

Within Italy, Occhetto calls for an increased role for civil society, for enhanced political participation. This openness to participation extends even to certain forms of voluntary or charitable activity. The PCI had previously been suspicious of the latter activity, viewing it as either exclusively a Catholic form of mobilization or as a covert attack that sought to weaken the welfare state by privatizing public functions. Occhetto wants the state to manage society less obtrusively, but not to abdicate its functions of regulation and guidance. He deems it necessary to reinforce the state's credibility against those who see it only as a source of corruption and incompetence.

Occhetto wants to make the PCI a more traditional social democratic force. His political direction is far more similar to that recommended by Paggi and D'Angelillo than to that of the Turinese federation that Hellman describes. The most obvious sign of this direction was his call for the creation of a shadow government, similar to that of the Labour Party in Great Britain, in which party political leaders, mirroring the responsibilities of individual cabinet ministers, develop programmatic alternatives to the proposals of the government (p. 83).

A second clue as to the party's new direction is the role that workers and workers' demands have in the PCI platform. These issues are subordinated to a general battle for citizens' rights, and are accorded the same space in the document as are problems of women.[7]

A third clue, ambiguous at the time, but clearer after the 19th PCI National Congress in early 1990, was the decision to change the name of the party. In 1989, it was framed as an issue reflecting the difficulties of the period, but the party did not want to be seen as being pressured by events within the Eastern bloc. In March 1990, at the 19th party congress, there was a clear call to dissolve the party and reconstitute it in the autumn under a different name. This move was aimed at ending the attrition of party strength, and at convincing the Socialists to consider a coalition of the Left as an alternative to the traditional Christian Democratic coalitions. Although the new political party would also be open to social movements—including the anti-nuclear, ecology, and feminist movements—to which the left wing of the PCI traditionally had been inclined, the overall direction was clearly to make the Communist party more closely resemble the social democratic parties of Western Europe.

IN SUM, the decade of the 1980's shows the cost to the PCI of its missed opportunities in the mid-1970's. In Stephen Hellman's terse judgment, "Instead of riding the wave of the 1970's, the PCI was flattened by it" (p. 218). The historic compromise compromised the party's capacities for political mobilization, its economic policy, and its relations to the international communist movement. In a futile effort to create a reform coalition with the Christian Democratic party, the PCI demobilized its own base and weakened its ability to reach out to new constituencies.

The ideology and organizational patterns that made the PCI so successful in creating the *partito nuovo* in the years immediately after the war proved unworkable in the 1970's. The situation recalls Karl Marx's comment: "The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living."[8]

The texts reviewed explain quite dramatically why the PCI is in sufficient crisis to change its name, and why the origins of this crisis cannot be attributed simplistically to the developments in Eastern Europe. Had the PCI not decided to move dramatically, the party would have faced slow decline. Its decision to take on a new name, and thus a new identity, is meant to combat that fate. Ironically, the same deeply rooted organizational and ideological habits that were so difficult to reform in the 1970's and 1980's make it premature to announce the death of the party, even if they have contributed to its decline.

[7]Occhetto, pp. 73–81.

[8]Karl Marx "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte," in Robert Tucker, Ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd ed., New York, W. W. Norton & Company, 1972, p. 595.



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# Soviet–Latin American Relations

**Roger Hamburg**

TIMOTHY ASHBY. *The Bear in the Back Yard. Moscow's Caribbean Strategy*. Lexington, MA, D. C. Heath, 1987.

NICOLA MILLER. *Soviet Relations with Latin America 1959–1987*. New York, Cambridge University Press, 1989.

DAVID D. NEWSOM. *The Soviet Brigade in Cuba. A Study in Political Diplomacy*. Bloomington, IN, Indiana University Press, 1987.

EUSEBIO MUJAL-LEÓN, Ed. *The USSR and Latin America: A Developing Relationship*. Winchester, MA, Unwin Hyman, 1989.

PETER SHEARMAN. *The Soviet Union and Cuba*. New York, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987.

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LATIN AMERICA in general and the Caribbean area in particular have been an anomaly in relations between Washington and Moscow at a time of unprecedented change in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. In Europe, the Soviet Union has renounced the division and cold war that entailed "a dangerous military confrontation which squeezed [the USSR] dry of its natural resources."[1] As Fedor Burlatskiy, a close associate of Mikhail Gorbachev and chairman of the Subcommittee on Humanitarian and Cultural Cooperation of the Supreme Soviet Committee on International Affairs, observed, "There is now a historical chance to find a new model of East-West relations, abandon the cold war, and integrate Eastern and Western Europe."[2] For his part, General John Galvin, the American commander of NATO's military forces, observed that while he was the personification of the cold war, "I'm seeing now the possibility that we can bring all of this to a close with the level of armaments brought down to a mere fraction of their present levels."[3]

Nevertheless, for reasons the books under review demonstrate, South and, much more significantly, Central America remain a field of bitter contention, a residue of a period of Soviet Third World activism that began with Nikita Khrushchev in the late 1950's, paused, and then accelerated under Leonid Brezhnev in the mid- and late 1970's. US Secretary of State James Baker said in February 1990 that Soviet behavior in the Caribbean area was the biggest obstacle to improvement in US-Soviet relations. In early 1990, persistent reports claimed that Moscow had shipped six MiG–29 advanced fighter planes to Cuba and four Mi–17 helicopter gunships to Nicaragua (Moscow insisted the latter were for civilian use).[4]

The United States has long been involved in Central America. Although Washington has exercised its influence primarily through eco-

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[1]Vyacheslav Dashichev, "On the Threshold of a European Home. Reviewing the Changes in Eastern Europe," *Moscow News*, Feb. 11–18, 1990.

[2]"Political Change in the Soviet Union," *Meeting Report*, Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies, Washington, DC, Dec. 5, 1989.

[3]General Galvin quoted in *Time* (New York), Feb. 12, 1990, p. 21.

[4]Linda Feldman in *The Christian Science Monitor* (Boston, MA), Feb. 8, 1990; ibid., Feb. 1, 1990; Rowland Evans and Robert Novak in *The Chicago Sun-Times*, Jan. 31, 1990.



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nomic means, it also has intervened militarily in the area on a number of occasions: in Nicaragua in 1909 and 1927, in Mexico in 1916, in the Dominican Republic in 1965, in Grenada in 1984, and in Panama in January 1990.

US defense authorities have feared that Caribbean countries might provide air, sea, and missile bases for foreign powers—a threat highlighted in the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962. They have also feared that the presence of Soviet client states in Central America could lead to a "Managua-style regime in Mexico," confronting the United States with a populous enemy on its southern flank.[5]

Even in South America (the southern part of which is as far from North America as is Europe, and where the influence of powers such as Great Britain, France, Italy, and Germany has been paramount), the US has had security concerns. For example, Timothy Ashby notes (pp. 156–57) that the US chief of naval operations was authorized to develop plans for sending an expeditionary force to South America to prevent the establishment of a Nazi puppet regime in Brazil. Nicola Miller (p. 170) observes that in the wake of the Falkland (Malvinas) war in 1982, rumors surfaced that Moscow planned to sell arms to Argentina not only to reduce the Soviet trade deficit with that country but also to obtain "fishery installations" at Ushuaia near Cape Horn to exploit a possible closing of the Panama Canal in the wake of instability in Central America. The arms offer and the request to use "fishing installations" were turned down by the Argentine military, but lingering concern about this and related matters may have been a factor that motivated Washington to improve relations with Argentina, which had been strained by American support for Great Britain in the 1982 conflict.

Cuba has presented especially acute problems for American foreign policy. As David D. Newsom knows from his own experience in the State Department, "few issues are as emotionally charged in American foreign policy" as Cuban ones (Newsom, p. 10). A large Soviet presence on an island 90 miles from the United States and the realization that Washington could do little to contain Cuban actions in Central America and Africa has added an element of frustration to every issue involving Cuba. There has been a tendency to see every development in Cuba as a reprise of the extremely tense missile crisis.

Differences in policy toward Cuba have also coincided with the liberal-conservative split that is often found in American thinking on Central America. The conservatives have remained anxious about the Soviet presence to the south (with anti-Castro exiles in Florida and elsewhere adding their own bitterness and anger about the revolution in Havana) and have invoked the specter of a series of militarized Cuban-like states armed with Soviet missiles. Liberals have downplayed the threat from Cuba and the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua. They contend that radical Latin American governments turn to Moscow because Washington has rebuffed them for rejecting key elements of the US economic and political model and Washington's historic relationship to Central America; liberals look to the extremes of poverty and wealth and the perpetuation of US-backed ruling oligarchies with an alliance among traditional landed elites, the army, and the church as the sources of revolutionary situations in Latin America.

Conservatives often argue that the United States should isolate fledgling Marxist-Leninist regimes economically and provide aid to insurgents to prevent the consolidation of those regimes—a two-track policy pursued toward Nicaragua for nearly a decade. By contrast, liberals generally warn of a potential repetition of the Vietnam experience, an argument that strikes a responsive chord in wide segments of the American public.

Soviet thinking and statements on Latin America reveal an inscrutable ambiguity: a willingness to cooperate with Washington on regional issues in Central America under the rubric of "new thinking," but an unwillingness to jettison totally Moscow's traditional clients. For example, in commenting on Central American revolutionary movements, one Soviet specialist remarked that "the [revolutionary] process is not rectilinear and is far from being irreversible, due to internal and external factors" (cited in Mujal-León, p. 10). Moscow extends aid to Latin America for a variety of purposes: to offset or diminish Western influence and interests (while being careful not to provoke direct US intervention), to support regimes and movements ideologically akin to the USSR (through economic assistance and strengthening of intelligence, security, and military capabilities), and to distract the US from exerting influence or countering Soviet aggressive actions elsewhere in the world. But Moscow has walked a fine line between the desire to support ideologically kindred regimes and movements and the desire not to antagonize Washington or to become overcommitted militarily or economically. As Anatoliy Dobrynin asked, "How can retaliatory and completely justified measures by revolutionary forces be kept within national boundaries; what can be done to prevent them from turning

[5]John Keegan and Andrew Wheatcroft, *Zones of Conflict: An Atlas of Future Wars*, New York, Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1986, pp. 120–21, 124, 125.



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into a new set of international tensions" (cited in Eusebio Mujal-León, p. 381)?

The Central and South American perspective itself—and the way that it is filtered through the contrasting "cognitive maps" of specialists on the area—affects the nature of scholarship in and debate regarding this part of the world. As William Leurs points out on page 111 of the Mujal-León volume, those who study the Soviet Union and those who study Latin America differ widely in their perception of the area, its problems, and the correct policy for the US to pursue. Latin Americanists in the United States find themselves "influenced by the Latin Left, severely critical of the US government, and sympathetic to and supportive of Latin American criticism of the United States." They tend to overrate the US's ability to shape events, and they also believe that Latin America is of prime importance to the United States. Specialists on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, by contrast, are critical of the Soviet Union, communism, and revolution. To them, Latin America is a "minor side show" in US foreign policy. In Leurs's view, each group reinforces the other's "low tolerance for discussing seriously the Soviet threat in the Caribbean Basin."

THE five volumes under review provide the reader a rich selection of material on Central and South America, analyzed against the backdrop of East-West relations. The works also provide case studies of the application of Gorbachev's "new thinking" to foreign policy and national security issues.

Eusebio Mujal-León observes that the Soviet striving for greater presence and legitimacy in Latin America has coincided with the desire of states in the area for greater freedom of maneuver vis-à-vis the United States and, in some cases, regional and subregional power ambitions vis-à-vis their neighbors. This generalization certainly fits Soviet-Mexican relations, as shown by Brian Lattel's essay in the Mujal-León volume.

As Moscow's power grew, it pursued a two-track policy in Latin America, creating lasting structural relationships with leftist governments in Cuba, Peru, Chile in the late 1960's and 1970's, and later with Nicaragua and Grenada, while also establishing less intense relations of diplomacy and trade with such large and assertive regional powers as Argentina, Mexico, and Brazil.

David Albright, in his general essay on Soviet Third World strategy in the Mujal-León volume, notes that the Soviet Union has been cautious in challenging American dominance in the region. Moscow has emphasized low-key, incremental support of armed struggle, a policy that was still capable—as seen in Nicaragua—of challenging Washington by raising the costs of open, direct US military intervention.

Edmé Domínguez's "Realities and Relations with the Soviet Union" (in the Mujal-León volume) gives particular attention to the differing lessons drawn by the Chilean Communist Party and other leftists from the 1973 fall of Salvador Allende. Some observers argued that the Chilean army launched a coup because it had not been "democratized." Others maintained that popular detachments on the Left had not been sufficiently armed to act as a counterweight to the army. Still others, especially Soviet sources defending a cautious policy on economic and military assistance to Allende, contended that "leftist currents" had pushed for changes too rapidly, and thus by accelerating the "transition period," alarmed a military that had not been sufficiently propagandized. This kind of argument is a classic Leninist indictment of "adventurism."

Edmé Domínguez contends that the lessons learned from Chile's experience were applied in Grenada 10 years later. There, the Marxist-Leninist regime understood that the "masses" had to be brought into the struggle, and the revolutionary process had to be defended with its own forces, because Cuban and Soviet "solidarity" had its limits. This lesson has also been followed by the guerrillas of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) in El Salvador and by the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, who have sought to create a political-military apparatus that could defend the revolution and to obtain sufficient Soviet, Cuban, and Eastern-bloc assistance to make outside intervention too costly.

Where the USSR's reliance on armed insurgencies has been successful, Moscow has bypassed local communist parties. What role do these parties play in the revolutionary politics in the area? They have never led revolutions in Latin America, even in Cuba and Nicaragua. In many countries, "rigid and anachronistic" theoretical frameworks ill suited to the political situation have prevented such parties from playing more than a marginal role. At the same time, revolutionaries such as Castro and the Sandinistas have appropriated what they found useful in Leninist teaching, initially eschewed Soviet direction, and then accepted it only to acquire military and economic assistance.

The second "track" of Soviet policy involves dealing with the larger states of the region through normal diplomatic relations. As Edmé Domínguez notes, the communist parties in the countries with which Moscow carries on diplomatic relations consent to them and profit from them (in Mujal-León, pp. 151, 155).



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However, broadening of diplomatic relations is impeded by the fact—noted by Elizabeth Kridl Valkenier (in the Mujal-León volume)—that Latin American states have far greater interdependence and economic complementarity with states in Western Europe and elsewhere than with the Soviet Union. Economic instruments have limited efficacy for Moscow in the region. Soviet machinery and equipment have failed to penetrate Latin American markets. Soviet servicing standards are low, and Soviet raw-material exports continue to compete with Latin American production.

Valkenier finds that Soviet aid to countries other than Cuba is limited, yet enables those countries to strike better terms with the United States and other Western countries. Moscow's economic involvement could grow if Soviet joint ventures with West European or Japanese firms could be formed in Latin America and Brazil. Moscow could also benefit from the debt crisis and protectionist pressures in the West.

Economic, political, and military relations between Eastern Europe and Latin America have been an important facet of the larger Soviet–Latin American relationship, as Michael Radu demonstrates in his chapter in the Mujal-León volume. He notes that Prague attracted some of the more prominent Latin American revolutionaries during the 1960's, including the exiled Guatemalan political figure, Jacobo Arbenz. In the 1970's, key Nicaraguan political figures had close ties with the German Democratic Republic, which helped create the Sandinista secret police and security apparatus. East Germany provided the military trucks used by the Sandinista army and internal security advisers, and trained and equipped Sandinista special operations forces. Captured documents also detail East European involvement with the FMLN in El Salvador, as well as East German and Czechoslovak assistance to the New Jewel Movement in Grenada, all part of the "international socialist division of labor" in Central America. Radu contends that the East Germans (together with the Cubans) bore the economic and political risks of greater Soviet-bloc involvement in Central America (in Mujal-León, p. 265). But recent developments in Eastern Europe suggest that this kind of assistance will soon end, if it has not already.

IN CONTRAST to the rest of Latin America, the Soviet-Cuban connection is highly nuanced and situation-specific. Jorge Domínguez (in the Mujal-León volume) argues that Cuba plays the role of vanguard, exemplar, broker, partner, and supporter; in short, it is a small power with big-power ambitions. The Cubans recognized Soviet hegemony, and in return Cuba was to be a good example of socialism's advantages for a Third World country and the benefits to be had from ties with Moscow. Cuba has been a Soviet partner on several issues, as when it supported the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan. At times, the Cubans have been a vanguard, inducing Moscow to adopt a more active approach in support of revolutionary governments. Such an approach was apparent in Nicaragua, where Cuba helped the Sandinistas to weld together the movement's disparate ideological tendencies, create a revolutionary core, and gradually open the way to greater Soviet involvement. The Cubans also led the USSR in providing aid to the Salvadorean guerrillas; here, Havana had its own reasons and was not just an eager Soviet adept.

Timothy Ashby disagrees with this assessment. He contends that in 1968 the Cubans accepted "vassalage" to Moscow and institutionalization of the Soviet model in exchange for Soviet economic aid (p. 51). This contention is dubious. Even Cuban dependence on Soviet economic largesse (more than half of all Moscow's economic assistance goes to Cuba) does not translate into Soviet domination on all issues, as tensions over Grenada showed.

The Cubans coached the Grenadans in how to bargain with Moscow and committed the USSR to greater involvement than Soviet leaders originally intended. In addition, clear disagreements emerged between the Cubans and the Soviets on policy toward Grenada. Cuba supported New Jewel Movement leader Maurice Bishop, who displayed a disturbing (to Moscow) tendency to independence, as he sought to improve leverage with Washington by seeing US national security advisers William Clark and Richard Burt, and other senior US officials (Jorge Domínguez in Mujal-León, p. 173). It is not known what direct role the Soviets played in the overthrow of Bishop, but Bernard Coard and Hudson Austin, who were Soviet-trained operatives, were responsible for Bishop's execution. The Soviet media supported the coup against Bishop, angering Castro, who insisted on punishment for those who were responsible for the killing of his protégé. Incidents like the Grenada debacle, Domínguez surmises, may have given the Soviets reason for exercising more caution in accepting the brokerage services of Havana (Mujal-León, p. 174).

Tensions in the Soviet-Cuban relationship are also being felt in the economic realm. Cuba remains dependent on sugar exports and external economic aid. Carmelo Mesa-Lago and Fernando Gil (in Mujal-León) note that growing Soviet internal economic difficulties and declines in oil output may make it



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difficult to maintain the present level of assistance to Cuba, independent of any desire to put pressure on Castro to undertake *perestroyka*. Cutbacks in food shipments and other assistance to Cuba may well ensue. There have been indications of some pressure on the Soviet government from the increasingly assertive Supreme Soviet to reduce assistance to Havana, irrespective of prior Soviet commitments.

Jorge Domínguez contends that despite disagreements, Moscow and Havana have "identical, broad, long-term, diplomatic, trade, and party policies, whose consequences help each government, even if the processes are distinct, and coordination is limited" (in Mujal-León, p. 177). Mujal-León, in the conclusion to his comprehensive volume, concurs, arguing that Soviet and Cuban policies have converged in recent years and that their policies have become more coordinated (except in Grenada, of course). Despite ongoing Soviet efforts to engage in discussion and resolution of Third World issues with Washington, Soviet support for Cuba remains at a high level, and Castro's desire to be a major actor on the world stage and not be limited to a more passive and boring role could create difficulties in this regard.

THE work by Nicola Miller—*Soviet Relations with Latin America, 1959–1987*—adds a significant Latin American dimension to our understanding of the Soviet connection with the area by stressing the way that Latin Americans themselves view Marxism and by examining Marxism-Leninism as a historical phenomenon in the area. She argues that economic and political realities sooner or later pressure all governments in the region, whatever their political orientation, to find a modus vivendi with Washington, especially in the economic realm. (The February 1990 election in Nicaragua may reflect the working of this kind of pressure. The US embargo may have helped to undercut the Sandinistas domestically, and the defeat of the Sandinistas at the polls may have been prompted by Nicaraguans' expectations that the US would provide their country with economic assistance once the Sandinistas were out of power.)

The Soviet Union cannot be an economic counterweight to the US because Soviet goods are not of the quality that Latin American countries want, and Moscow is self-sufficient in some of the goods that Latin American states export. Neither is Moscow a source of military hardware. With the exception of Peru, which received Soviet military assistance from 1973 to 1975, Miller notes that only Cuba, Grenada, and Nicaragua—which were denied access to Western arms—were ready to receive Soviet weapons.

Despite limits on Soviet influence in the area, Miller observes in a chapter entitled "Communist Subversion in Latin America?" that for intellectuals who had renounced their Roman Catholic faith, Marxism offered a totalistic world view that was welcomed because it prescribed the unity of theory and practice and advanced a program for immediate political action in which they could play a role. But this fascination with *Marxism* has not markedly improved the prospects of *Leninist* parties in the region.

Miller argues that those movements in Latin America that have taken power in the name of Marx were led by revolutionary "caudillos," and hence were not orthodox Marxist-Leninist parties. Castro did not acknowledge his Marxism-Leninism until after he was in power. The Sandinistas drew on Augusto Sandino rather than on Marx or Lenin as the legitimating hero of their revolution. The Cuban revolution had an impact in the area, but only as a catalyst for a "radicalized generation who were already looking for an alternative to the Soviet theory of revolution in stages" (p. 50). By contrast, communist parties in the region did not accept Castro as a catalyst; they rejected the "role of revolutionary pope" that Castro arrogated for himself.

Although he was not originally a member of the Cuban Communist Party, Castro ultimately embraced Moscow. Miller disputes the notion that it was US policy that "drove" Castro into Soviet arms. Political pressures within Cuba and Castro's personal inclinations required that the post-revolutionary relationship with Washington be different from the previous, "imperialist" one. Castro also favored the radical transformation of Cuba via revolution. The social change that Castro wanted the revolution to effect was incompatible with powerful domestic and foreign interests perceived to have been led by the US. (Castro told Washington that he would not accept loans from a State Department that was almost eager to offer them, a refusal that the Cuban Communists apparently endorsed.) Castro had everything to gain by moving closer to the Cuban Communists, who could provide him with an organizational apparatus and political expertise that were lacking in his own July 26th Movement and who could help him obtain Soviet assistance.

Moscow appeared at first to favor restraining rather than radicalizing the Cuban revolution. But Castro had his own logic, and the Soviets were as much the courted as the suitor in dealing with the Cubans.

As Moscow was to experience with Grenada—and to some extent Nicaragua later (although the Soviets learned from the Cuban experience in these cases)—Castro want-



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ed to present the USSR with the "fait accompli" of socialist revolution to enlist Moscow's total support. The State Department warned that Castro would try to provoke Washington to actions that would justify more Soviet support and improve his anti-capitalist credentials with the Cuban people. Miller contends that the Soviets were not prepared to underwrite Cuba after the failed Bay of Pigs invasion but had little choice when, for domestic political reasons, US President John Kennedy refused to seek an accommodation with Cuba after his political humiliation there.

Miller argues that although Moscow has provided support in the form of weapons adequate to defend Cuba, Castro has virtually no significant offensive air- or sea-lift capabilities and lacks the ability to challenge the US outside of Cuba. Ashby takes issue with this latter view (pp. 57–79), and has been somewhat borne out by Cuban actions in Grenada and Nicaragua. Castro pushed Brezhnev for a stronger Soviet military commitment to Cuba and for a Warsaw Pact promise to help Cuba in time of need, but despite the continuing high level of military support, neither commitment has been forthcoming.

Surprisingly, Miller (p. 119) found that at times, Castro's interests pushed him to take a less belligerent position than Moscow on some Central American issues. For Cuba, the fate of revolutionary regimes in the Caribbean region is intimately linked to its own security concerns. Thus, Castro has pressured the Salvadorean guerrillas to make a peace agreement with the El Salvador government, fearing escalation, US involvement, and a possible military move against Havana.

The Soviet Union, however, sees the region primarily in the context of strategic rivalry with the United States and in terms of the potential that it offers for exercising leverage in superpower negotiations. Miller contends that Soviet leader Yuriy Andropov may have even welcomed a direct US move against Managua as a means to reduce Ronald Reagan's domestic popularity and to offset or derail US pressure regarding the Soviet presence in Afghanistan (p. 120).

Moscow, while not abandoning Cuba, does not want to become similarly engaged elsewhere, Miller believes, because it complicates improving relations with other Third World countries, including those in Latin America. The Soviets derive numerous benefits from Cuba, but another such involvement would be a case of diminishing returns.

Indeed, the level of support accorded by Moscow to the Sandinistas supports this contention. The Soviet Union demonstrated restraint in Nicaragua by sending out signals to the United States, Western Europe, and Latin America that its aid to the Sandinistas did not indicate aggressive intentions and that it would do nothing if Washington intervened. In addition, Moscow has given the Sandinistas "just enough, but no more" (Miller, p. 204) to ensure the survival of their revolution—not unlimited protection. The Soviets did nothing to commit themselves to respond should Washington have decided to escalate the war there, although Soviet and bloc aid (especially oil shipments) increased in the wake of reductions of aid to Nicaragua by France and the European Economic Community, which was prompted by disillusionment with the Sandinistas among sections of the Socialist International in Europe. However, when Nicaraguan domestic economic and political intransigence plus attacks by US-supported Contras weakened the economy there and forced greater defense spending, Moscow, while not cutting off the Nicaraguans, responded by urging greater diversification of aid sources, especially in oil, and a reduced pace of "socialist construction." The Soviets also expressed a concern with "economic mismanagement" and "alleged wastefulness" in Nicaragua (Miller, p. 216).

Miller contends that Soviet Central American policy was designed to avoid humiliation in the area while engaged in Afghanistan. Following this line of argument, it becomes clear why prospects improved for a reduced Soviet commitment to Managua as Moscow withdrew its forces from Afghanistan.

IN STARK contrast to Miller, the work by Ashby—*The Bear in the Back Yard*—presents a dark perspective on Soviet intentions in the Caribbean. Ashby argues that Cuba is of value to Moscow for its strategic location and "willingness to serve Moscow as an international proxy." Although Soviet support to Nicaragua was cautiously orchestrated, it was "considerably overt" in 1978–79. Soviet military advisers arrived shortly after the FSLN victory, and five Soviet generals came to Managua in August 1979. Based on interviews with former Sandinista generals, Ashby finds that the Nicaraguans were engaged in preparing "offensive and defensive scenarios" for future Central American conflicts (p. 113).

Ashby argues that by 1982, the Soviet Union and its East European allies had given the Sandinistas an "offensive water-crossing capability," and Soviet mobile rocket launchers provided them with firepower unmatched in the region. More ominous, according to Ashby, the Soviets had vaguely threatened to place missiles in Managua as part of the diplomatic bargaining over the INF negotiations after the



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United States put intermediate-range missiles in West Germany. Once again, Nicaragua would have been a card in a much larger game.

Ashby believes that the Soviets used Nicaragua to divert American power so that it would be less able to act effectively in Europe and Asia. In a conflict elsewhere, positions in Nicaragua would afford Moscow the ability to interdict sea lanes of communication; as Miller's American informant noted, the "nuisance value" of these Soviet forces would be great and considerably complicate American contingency planning (Miller, p. 198). Finally, a Central American isthmus dominated by Soviet client states "would almost certainly lead to a Managua-style regime in Mexico—threatening the US along an undefended, contiguous border some two thousand miles long" (p. 157). The Sandinistas themselves hoped that diplomatic maneuvering, military aid, and (most important) domestic US politics would provide them time to consolidate and expand.

As a "US counterstrategy" to thwart the buildup of the USSR's power and influence in the area, Ashby suggested aid to insurgent forces in the area (the Nicaraguan Contras) and governments under assault (El Salvador) to avoid the need for eventual direct US intervention (pp. 187–89). Ashby believed (in 1987) that given sufficient military assistance, the Contras could remove the Sandinistas from power, but if such help were not forthcoming, direct US intervention would be unavoidable. Such an intervention without use of tactical nuclear weapons would require a substantial deployment of US ground, sea, and air forces, especially if the action were extended to Cuba. Ashby contends that the Soviets would not have challenged such moves.

Ashby criticizes US policymakers for opposing some cases of Soviet power projection into the area but tolerating others. Washington's continued ambiguity about what constituted a Soviet strategic threat in the Caribbean left large loopholes for a gradual and purposeful Soviet military buildup with minimal risk (p. 171). Moscow was able to establish an initial precedent followed by a minimization of the action's strategic significance. Other precedents then followed, and the build-up continued.

To counter these kinds of moves and to raise uncertainties in Moscow and Managua, American administrations have in recent years broached the possibility of direct intervention. Washington issued warnings about the consequences of certain Soviet actions but avoided the domestic and hemispheric costs that Ashby predicted would flow from direct involvement. Aid to the Contras foundered on the shoals of sympathy for the Sandinista "David" against the American "Goliath" and the fear of a Vietnam-type involvement. Nevertheless, until the February 1990 elections, the Contras survived as a force, even as Washington and Moscow apparently sought to come to agreement in support of regional peace initiatives, a policy that had some early signs of success with the elections in Nicaragua.

THE work by Newsom, *Soviet Brigade in Cuba,* illustrates another facet of Moscow's incremental strategy in the Caribbean, although it was in fact written to illustrate another characteristic of US policy in the area—the close intermingling of domestic and foreign policy considerations to the confusion and consternation of both allies and adversaries.

President Kennedy, as part of the agreement ending the Cuban missile crisis, had apparently privately agreed to permit a Soviet military unit to remain in Cuba. Newsom argues that the government lacked an "institutional memory" of Kennedy's agreement, and then, because Washington's intelligence capability was diverted to other areas—especially Southeast Asia—Carter administration officials did not know that Soviet troops remained in Cuba after withdrawal of the missiles (p. 5).

The understanding about the mission of these Soviet troops was vague, but Newsom insists that they were not—and never had been—a direct threat to US security. Information about the brigade was made public through a variety of channels and soon became an issue in the campaign of Idaho Senator Frank Church, the liberal Democratic chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Church was under strong criticism from conservatives in his state for alleged "softness" toward the Cubans. The brigade became a still greater issue in the Florida campaign of Democratic Senator Richard Stone, who felt the ire of anti-Castro Cuban exiles.

To be sure, the Soviets were not sufficiently sympathetic to the diffusion of responsibilities in the US government and the demand for public disclosure, especially when dealing with a domestically sensitive issue like Cuba. Moreover, and here the parallel with Ashby's focus on a Soviet incremental strategy is apparent, Moscow had been testing the limits of the 1962 Kennedy-Khrushchev understanding—as it had done with Richard Nixon in 1972 on the submarine base issue.[6]

Washington was eventually put in

[6]On September 2, 1970, after a series of Soviet naval exercises in the Caribbean area, the Nixon administration warned the Soviet Union not to build a strategic submarine base at Cienfuegos (Ashby, p. 68).



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the difficult position of trying to get Moscow to admit publicly that the brigade was only for defense and training, not offensive military purposes. This approach hindered "quiet diplomatic bargaining" to "avoid surprising other governments with public information that may affect their interests" (p. 22).

I found Newsom's study contradictory. Is its main purpose to illustrate perennial US confusion at high levels because of the need for bureaucratic compromise and because of the distractions presented by new issues that keep moving to the front burner? Or is public intrusion and confusion the culprit? The study takes no sides, nor does it explore the potentially disturbing consequences of Soviet probings—against the backdrop of the many complicating factors that the author describes—to discover what kind of actions might be permitted by any US-Soviet understandings.

The study might have raised yet another issue: aside from the perennial question of democratic accountability, what is the relative efficacy of keeping an issue within diplomatic channels, as opposed to using public disclosure and debate as deliberate means of diplomatic pressure? If private diplomatic efforts to resolve the problem are to no avail, public debate may become of real utility, something more than a "necessary evil."

IN THE last of the five studies reviewed here, British analyst Peter Shearman uses the examples of developments in Angola and the Horn of Africa to demonstrate that the Soviets and Cubans do disagree, and that it is not always the Cubans who give ground in such disputes. He concludes from this that Western Europe could be a "third force" in mitigating US-Cuban rivalry, especially because Latin America is not of the immediate strategic significance to Europe that it is to Washington (p. 87).

Despite the close interweaving of Cuba's economy with those of the Eastern bloc (at the time when Shearman was writing) and its dependence on Moscow for economic survival, the author believed this dependence could be reduced. He argues that increased West European investments in Cuba would give Havana an incentive to reduce its overseas military involvements and practice more restraint internationally. A tacit agreement regarding security in the Caribbean Basin and Central America could also result.

Shearman couples his proposals with the need for diplomatic warnings and strong protests about unacceptable Soviet and Cuban behavior. However, he places too much emphasis, in my view, on the argument that improved access to resources can change a government's international orientations. The recent history of the improvement of Soviet and East European relations with the West points in the other direction; political changes at home come first; then improved political relations with foreign states; and finally improved economic relations. To come to terms with Western Europe, not to mention with the United States, Cuba must go partly down the road taken by Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Such reforms are not in evidence at the present time.

WHAT trends can be outlined for Soviet–Latin American policy in the light of these five studies? To repeat Dobrynin's view, support for "movements fighting for their liberation" cannot be carried to the point where dangerous international consequences—i.e., a Soviet-American clash—are likely. Gorbachev will in all likelihood heed this admonition, but he is confronted by conflicting domestic pressures. As recently as early 1988, for example, veteran Soviet military writer Col. Gen. Dmitriy Volkogonov insisted that "the Armed Forces also exist for the purpose of rendering help to progressive regimes and national liberation movements,"[7] a statement reminiscent of the Brezhnev period. Until early 1990, the Soviet military continued to be a major factor in implementing policy in places like Nicaragua—even if it did not play a determining role in decisions concerning the direction and level of broader policy.

But even at the highest political level, "ill will" has not disappeared from Soviet international behavior.[8] The ambiguous situation regarding external supply of arms to Central American countries makes one cautious about making excessively and prematurely optimistic assessments of Soviet "new thinking"—even at a time of domestic turmoil and economic stringency in the Soviet Union. Even if Soviet arms aid to Nicaragua has stopped, there are still many armaments under Sandinista control, questions about whether the Chamorro government can control the army, and what leverage, if any, the Soviets are using on the Sandinista army to stop regional arms shipments.

Even those Supreme Soviet deputies who are beginning to assert some "oversight" over Soviet international behavior are caught up in the rivalry with Washington. They may be anxious to cut commitments and external economic assistance but will react to what they consider excesses in US behavior, such as the invasion of Panama. In criticiz-

[7]Cited in Francis Fukuyama, *Gorbachev and the New Soviet Agenda in the Third World*, R-3634-A, Santa Monica, CA, The RAND Corp., June 1989, p. 29.

[8]Lilita Dzirkals, *Glasnost and Soviet Foreign Policy*, A RAND Note, Santa Monica, The RAND Corp., CA, January 1990, p. 35.



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ing American actions there, one Soviet parliamentarian argued that Soviet "hawks" now had additional support for their position, which could "complicate [the] parliament's consideration of [the] proposal to proceed along the road of disarmement."[9]

In questioning Secretary of State Baker during Baker's February 1990 visit to Moscow, Yevgeniy Primakov, who has often advanced a conciliatory stance in dealing with Third World conflicts, said that "you have called on us to change our policies concerning Cuba and Nicaragua. Is the United States ready to undertake a public promise not to use force in Latin America, provided, of course, that [geopolitical] events do not threaten you?" Baker replied that he would be interested in looking at the language of Soviet support for Nicaragua and Cuba, something that "we might be able to reach an agreement on."[10]

Certain tests or indicators might be applied to gauge Soviet behavior in places like Cuba and Nicaragua. One would involve unilateral withdrawal by Moscow from the forward positions occupied during the 1970's. But it would be difficult to relinquish commitments made some time ago. Gorbachev's statements about halting new aid shipments to Nicaragua, however imperfectly carried out, plus support for, and possible pressure on Nicaragua to comply with, regional peace plans for elections could be a hopeful harbinger for the future. The consequences of such pressure may have been in evidence in the February 25, 1990, election that removed the Sandinistas from power.

Second, some toning down of ideological rhetoric would be desirable—and more possible, given the current questioning of its Leninist source—although the great power and ideological roots of Soviet Third World policy are not necessarily mutually reinforcing. A third test would be Soviet failure to take advantage of new Cubas and Nicaraguas.[11] Indeed, all indications point to the low probability of new commitments at a time of general Soviet desire not to roil international waters.

But Soviet Third World policy will evolve at a much slower and more uneven pace than developments in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union would suggest. Moscow will persist in perceiving Washington as both partner and rival in managing tensions, and "codes of conduct" or ententes outside of Europe are not easily constructed. Yet another consideration intrudes. Although the Soviet Union is today at best a marginal actor economically in Latin America, this role may change as Soviet international economic policy evolves, joint ventures are launched, and the need for the military instrument in extending power and influence is reduced.

[9]Thomas L. Friedman in *The New York Times*, Feb. 11, 1990.
[10]Ibid.
[11]Fukuyama, op. cit., pp. 32–33.



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# Correspondence

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## MILITARY-CIVILIAN CONVERSION IN USSR

TO THE EDITORS: The current pace of change in the Soviet Union is indeed very fast, but I was disappointed to see that William H. Kincade and T. Keith Thomson's "Economic Conversion in the USSR: Its Role in *Perestroyka*," published in the January-February 1990 issue of *Problems of Communism*, does not document changes that took place six months earlier. Their list of defense production ministries in the diagram on page 89 is incorrect. John Tedstrom gives a comprehensive account of these changes in "Managing the Conversion of the Defense Industries," in the February 16, 1990, issue of Radio Liberty's *Report on the USSR* (Munich), but reports of the changes appeared in the Soviet press in the summer of 1989 and a complete list of the new ministries appeared in *Izvestiya* (Moscow) on July 6, 1989.

According to Tedstrom's updated list, the mistakes in Kincade and Thomson's diagram are as follows: the Ministry of Machine-Building and the Ministry of Communications Equipment have been merged with other defense production ministries, while the Ministry of Atomic Energy has been removed from the military-industrial complex. The Ministry of Civil Aviation, the Ministry of Communications, and the State Committee for Computer Technology have been moved from the civilian economy to the military-industrial complex. The complete list of ministry-level organizations subordinate to the Military-Industrial Commission is: Ministry of Aviation Industry, Ministry of Civil Aviation, Ministry of Communications, Ministry of Defense Industry, Ministry of Electronics Industry, Ministry of General Machine-Building, Ministry of Radio Industry, Ministry of Ship-Building, and State Committee for Computer Technology and Information Science.

ANA GOSHKO
New Haven, CT

THE AUTHORS RESPOND: We welcome the corrections to our article by Ana Goshko. We would note, however, that, as John Tedstrom points out in his piece in *Report on the USSR,* it remains unclear whether the new Ministry of the Atomic Energy Industry is subordinate to the military-industrial complex, to the fuel and energy complex, or to both. As for the Ministry of Machine-Building, Tedstrom speaks of its "apparent merger" with the Ministry of Defense Industry. His detailed analysis of organizational changes in the Soviet military-industrial complex is of great value to all those concerned with industrial conversion in the USSR.

WILLIAM H. KINCADE
T. KEITH THOMSON.

## CHINA'S POPULATION

TO THE EDITORS: I read with great interest the item "The Aging of China's Population" (*Problems of Communism,* November-December 1988), which seems to me a balanced analysis of the great demographic problem confronting the People's Republic of China. Therefore, it was striking to me that next to the author's name, the publisher gave notice that her opinions "do not necessarily reflect the official position of the US government," a redundant remark (since it already appears in general terms on the index and credits page) that did not accompany any other text of the issue, some of which were in my opinion rather more controversial than that of Judith Banister. This double warning sounds like a diplomatic disclaimer, the more incomprehensible given that Dr. Banister's forbearance with regard to the rulers of China, who are responsible for the one-child policy, leads her to write this memorable paragraph: "In conclusion, it is important to remember that although China currently lacks the resources that developed countries have to cope with population aging, it does, like other developing countries, have time. It will be several decades before a high proportion of its population is made up of the elderly. These years can be used to set up systems designed to cope with the needs of China's inevitably huge elderly population."

JAVIER OLAVE
Deputy Chief Editor
*Expansion*
Madrid

THE EDITORS RESPOND: We appreciate Mr. Olave's interest in Dr. Banister's article and hasten to note that the "disclaimer" included in the author's biographical sketch is a normal practice with all authors employed by the US Government. It is printed in the author's credit because the index page of the journal is not generally retained by scholars and researchers when they clip an article for their files.

THE EDITORS



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